★ SPECIAL ISSUE

THE NEED FOR VICTORY

NEW MASSES

OCTOBER 20th 15¢ 20¢ IN CANA

Articles by *Doxey Wilkerson, Earl Browder, J. S. Redding, James W. Ford, Ralph Ellison, L. D. Reddick, Alva Bessie. Civil War letters of General Ames.* **Comment by** *Lieut. Gov. Charles Poletti, Paul Robeson, Hele Keller, Alderman Earl B. Dickerson, Reps. A. J. Sabath and Warren Magnuson, Assemblyman Hulan Jack, othe*

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LET THIS

ull citizenship rights for the Negro—a crucial

ITEM: A Negro soldier was stabbed to death in a fight between United States Negro troops and white military police in Northern Ireland.

Item: A young San Francisco Negro, Festus Coleman, has been sentenced to sixty-five years in jail on a trumped-up charge of "rape and robbery." He was arrested as a result of a fight which arose when he accidentally stumbled upon an army officer in the park lying on a blanket with a seventeen-year-old high school girl.

Item: Three Negro soldiers, Richard Adams, John W. Bordenave, and Lawrence Mitchell, are scheduled to die October 30 after being convicted by a civil court in Alexandria, La., on a "rape" charge. The complainant against them was a white prostitute.

Three items out of many like them. Put them all together and what do they spell? America? Fight against fascism? People's war?

LET us stop to think about those items and what they mean. We Americans are today being forced to pay certain unpaid bills of history. Because our leaders and the leaders of the other major powers with the exception of the Soviet Union refused to join together to block fascist aggression in the days of peace, we and other peoples are paying a frightful tribute in blood and toil and sacrifice. And because our country has failed to treat the Negro as an equal, has failed to enforce the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, the greatest threat our nation has ever faced finds our social fabric weakened by race tensions, its very fight for life imperiled by the refusal to utilize to the full the strength, the energy, the creativeness of 13,000,000 black Americans.

There are those who say: this is not the time to stir up the race issue; it's bad for national unity. Some who talk this way are shrewd and hypocritical men, some are spineless men, some merely blundering men. An example of a shrewd and hypocritical man is John Temple Graves, columnist of the Birmingham *Age-Herald*. Graves' liberalism is of the "some of my best friends are . . ." variety. In an article, "The Southern Negro and the War Crisis" in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* Graves attacks "extremists" among both northern Negroes and whites, including among the latter Mrs. Roosevelt and the Roosevelt administration. While professing to favor the elimination of discriminatory practices that interfere with the war effort, Graves' article is actually an apology for the worst features and the worst elements in southern life that are actively obstructing the war. In one place he writes: "There was a very real need of the famous Executive Order 8802 against discriminations in wartime industrial jobs." But only a few paragraphs later he attacks the US Employment Service for banning entries on its cards indicating race. And he comes out for abolition of the poll tax—by leaving it to the poll tax states themselves. As soon ask the devil to outlaw sin.

The spineless or blundering men are exemplified in three letters NEW MASSES received in response to its request for statements from prominent Americans for inclusion in this issue. The author of one letter is an eminent scholar who has been active in the fight for civil liberties; another is a distinguished scientist, and the third a prominent southern publisher of two newspapers. Wrote the scholar: "I will say that when our nation is involved in a fight for its independent existence is, as I see it, a poor time to bring up and push to a settlement the question of virtual denial of Negro suffrage by means of poll tax legislation. An issue so divisive should have been threshed out when we were at peace." The scientist wrote: "Knowing the Negro as I do, I cannot but feel that the present agitation for his rights is both ill-timed and fallacious." The newspaper publisher wrote: "I am inclined to think it probably is not wise for me to make a statement at this time. The fight for better interrac[illegible]ations is at best a delicately balanced thing. What I am an[illegible]s always to do is to say or do nothing that might tend to in[illegible]re any effectiveness and usefulness these papers have in respec[illegible] of improved race relations and better treatment for the Negro. I may be wrong, and it may be that I am simply rationalizing. I do not know."

NEW MASSES takes issue with this hush-hush attitude. This is a kind of isolationism in respect to the Negro question that is as dangerous in its way as political isolationism was in regard to the fascist menace. In fact, the two are related: it is the pro-fascist and defeatist forces—the Ku Kluxers with and without the hoods—that are most determined that there be no change in the Negro's status except for the worse. It is the failure to act against them and the anti-Negro, anti-Semitic, anti-foreign-born practices they foster that weakens national unity. The unpleasant facts of American life cannot be blotted out of existence by ignoring them. Whether we choose to recognize it or not, the things that have been done and are being done to the Negro stick in our country's flesh. And it is not the Negro alone who suffers. NEW MASSES believes that *because* "our nation is involved in a fight for its independent existence," everything that stands in the way of this fight must be wiped out. The evils that might have been tolerated in time of peace (though there never has been a time when the crimes against the Negro people were really tolerable) cannot be tolerated today, because they have become a positive menace to the nation's life. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves as a war measure. Today we must give jobs to Negroes, provide them with decent housing, abolish the poll tax, outlaw lynching, jail inciters of race hatred, and make at least a start toward ending Jim Crowism in the armed forces by organizing a mixed Negro and white brigade—measures likewise necessary to win the war.

IT ALL boils down to this: when we must strain every nerve and sinew in a desperate struggle for our national existence, can we *afford* to have American boys in uniform fighting and killing other American boys in uniform? Can we *afford* to have that uniform itself become in even the slightest degree a dreaded symbol for millions of Negroes and hundreds of millions of other colored peoples throughout the world? Can we *afford* to permit anyone the luxury of saying: I will employ only workers with white skins? It's as simple as that. This is not a question of abstract justice; it's a question of life and death for America. Jim Crowism, lynching, discrimination, poll taxes work for Hitler. They must be rooted out so that *all* Americans can work and fight for America—for victory.

A question of life and death for America and all the United Nations is also involved in an issue that is closely related to the struggle of the Negro people, the issue of colonial liberation, particularly as it affects India. There too we are dealing with matters not of abstract justice, but of war necessities. Wendell Willkie in his speech at Chungking reported that in the countries he had visited the ordinary people "all doubt in varying degrees the readiness of the leading democracies of the world to stand up and be counted upon for the freedom of others after the war is over." This doubt likewise exists among many American Negroes, not only because of their own experiences, but because of the treatment of India, Puerto Rico, and other subject nations. And the failure to open a second front only intensifies these doubts. Many Negroes say: if a promise for 1942 is not kept, what reason is there to believe that a promise for after the war will be better honored?

As Mr. Willkie pointed out, only action now and "ironclad

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PEOPLE FIGHT

issue in winning the war. An editorial

guarantees" will mean anything to the colonial peoples. And only action now will mean anything to the Negro people. One must not, of course, overlook the advances that have been made, meager as they are in relation to the total picture and the total need. President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 banning discrimination in war industry and his creation of the Fair Employment Practice Committee are of historic importance; they need to be further implemented in order to guarantee that every Negro available for war production has a job. The appointment of a Negro, Capt. Hugh Mulzac, to command one of the new Liberty ships, the *Booker T. Washington,* is another example of the breaking down of barriers. And even the timid action of the Navy Department in opening limited enlistment for Negroes represents, despite its Jim Crow basis, something of a forward step. Heartening too is the fact that the issue of Negro rights, which in the past was fought for largely by Negro organizations, the CIO, and left-wing groups (NEW MASSES is proud to have pioneered in this respect), and the related issue of colonial liberation have now been taken up by millions of Americans and have found such notable champions as Vice-President Wallace, Wendell Willkie, Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles, Pearl Buck, and Mrs. Roosevelt. All this represents the liberating influence of the people's war as against those influences which would force it into the pattern of an imperialist conflict.

AND so we face a transcendent issue, an issue both of the war and the peace, an issue that is moral as well as social and political, that decisively affects the outcome of the war and the whole future of mankind. It is in the hope of contributing toward resolving this problem in the only way that will help win the war and guarantee the fulfillment of the pledges in the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter that NEW MASSES presents this special issue. We are happy to have been joined in these pages by many others, Negro and white, who may not all see eye to eye with us on other questions, but who agree on the necessity of ending those abuses against Negro Americans that hinder and jeopardize victory. In the century of the common man there can be no "superior" and "inferior" race, no subjection of one nation to another. The first American killed in the War of Independence was a Negro, Crispus Attucks. The first American killed by the Japanese in the present war was a Negro, Robert H. Brooks. Colin Kelly and Dorie Miller are heroes who belong to the whole of America. Let Negro and white fight together for an America that belongs to the whole people.

Official US Navy Photograph

They're in the navy now. All-Negro drum and bugle corps at the US Naval Training Station at Camp Robert Smalls, Great Lakes, Ill. Negroes are no longer being confined to mess-boy jobs, but are being accepted into the Coast Guard as part of the regular personnel.

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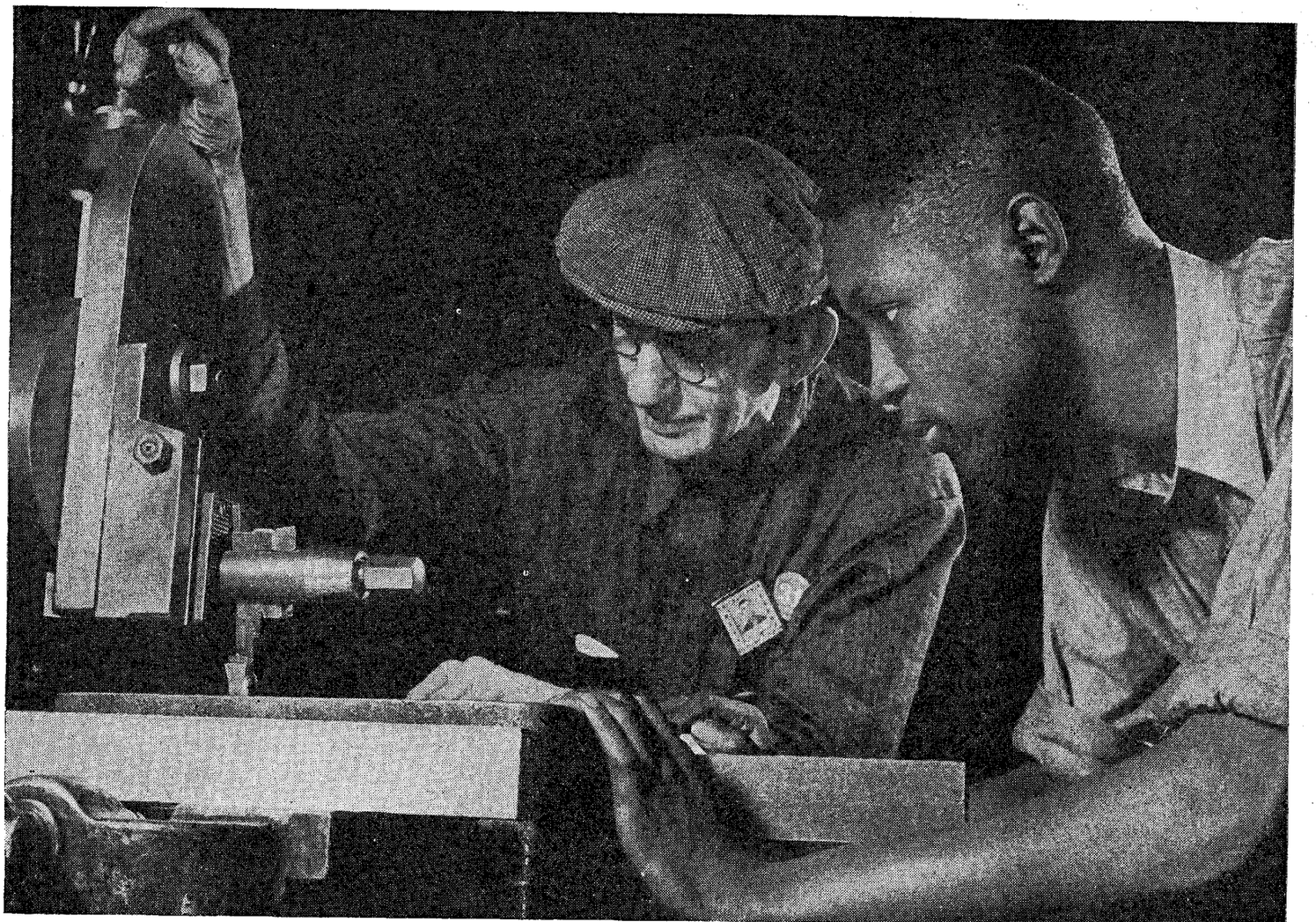

This ought to happen everywhere—but doesn't. A veteran worker in an eastern navy yard instructs a Negro machinist apprentice. Liberman, OWI

FEPC—THE ALPHABET OF HOPE

Discrimination imperils full use of manpower. What the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee has done so far. A study and some proposals by Prof. Doxey Wilkerson.

DOXEY WILKERSON is an associate professor of education at Howard University. Born in Missouri in 1905, Dr. Wilkerson has been active in the field of education since 1927, as research associate for the National Advisory Committee on Education, and has participated in the Carnegie Corporation study of the American Negro. In 1937-40 he was a vice-president of the American Federation of Teachers, and has recently found time, amid his studies as well as other educational activities, to become a vice-president of the International Labor Defense.

THERE are at least 36,000,000 Americans—over one-fourth of the entire population—whose race, creed, color, or national origin present special difficulties in seeking employment in war production. They are the approximately 14,000,000 Negroes, 5,000,000 Jews, 5,000,000 aliens, 6,000,000 foreign-born citizens, 1,000,000 Orientals and American Indians, and 5,000,000 Spanish-speaking peoples, or peoples of Spanish extraction. (One might add 26,000,000 Catholics, who also, in certain areas, are discriminated against in employment.) At a time when maximum use of all available manpower is an urgent requirement of the war effort, this state of affairs represents a serious peril to the nation. It is the problem which the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee was created to tackle.

A few quotations, culled from scores of others in the records of the FEPC, illustrate the nature of this problem.

"The company is satisfied with the type of white help it has been getting. . . . There may come a time when we have to hire even women—and Negroes too—but right now we don't have to." Thus (in January 1942) the personnel manager of the Babcock & Wilcox Co. (Bayonne, N. J.) replied to repeated protests of the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America against racial discrimination in employment.

"White Christian" is specified in all requisitions for employment filed (up to Sept. 1, 1941) by Carl Norden, Inc. (New York) and by the Fairchild Aviation Corp. (Jamaica, N. Y) with the US Employment Service. "Gentiles," "Gentiles, Protestant," "Native-born White," and "White Girls" are among the specifications which abound in advertisements and requisitions by other firms. One Philadelphia company sent a training order to the National Youth Administration for two hundred "second generation, white" youths.

"Colored steamfitters and plumbers must be employed by colored steamfitting and plumbing contractors, and then only on such buildings as are occupied or due to be occupied by

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colored owners or tenants." This is the only formula under which the AFL Chicago Journeymen Plumbers Union, Local 130, and the Steamfitters Protective Association, Local 597, will certify skilled Negro workers for employment.

"A bunch of snoopers, two of whom are Negroes, will assemble in Birmingham, June 18, for a three-day session to determine whether the South is doing right by Little Sambo." Thus the Gadsden, Ala., *Times* hailed the most recent hearings of the FEPC. Other characterizations of the committee and its hearings by a minority of the southern press include: "group of black-and-tan investigators," "halo-wearing missionaries of New Deal socialism," "Roosevelt racial experts," "three-day inquisition at Birmingham," "an instrument for political and social reform operating under a vicious disguise," and "dat cummitte fer de purteckshun uv Rastus & Sambo."

The correct frame of reference in which to view this problem was defined last February by FEPC's chairman, Dr. Malcolm S. MacLean, in opening the New York hearings on discrimination in defense training and employment: "To draw lines of employment on any basis except that of fitness is to deny ourselves the full use of our manpower . . . but even more serious than that is the fact that it impairs national morale, slows down our war effort, and increases the threat of our destruction. . . . This is an all-out war and anything that does not fall into line with that idea is very close to treason."

Dr. MacLean aptly posed the problem in its correct relationship to the war. The job of uprooting racial bars to employment can no longer be viewed merely as a question of social ethics. It is now one of the urgent and imperative requirements of victory.

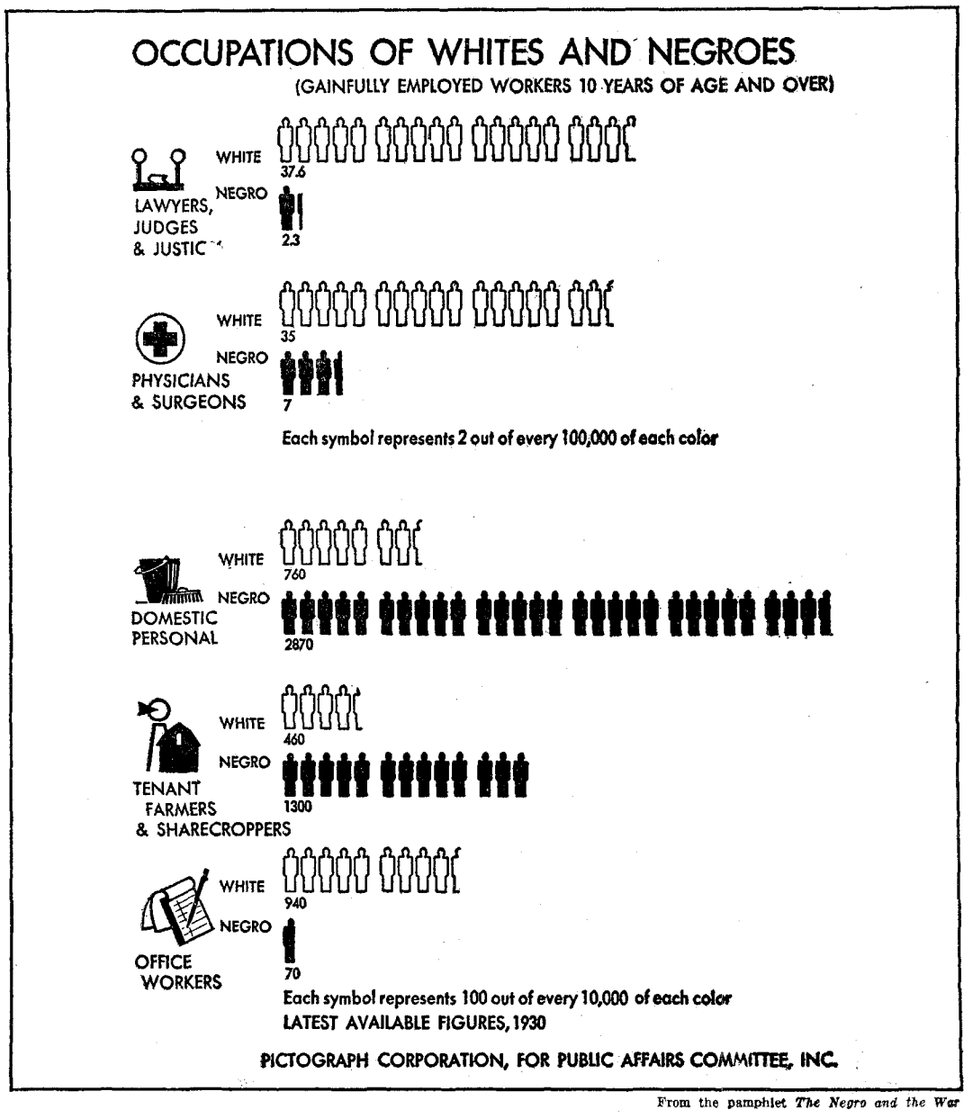
ALTHOUGH the FEPC is but one of several federal agencies operating in this field (most notable among the others are the Negro Employment and Training Branch and the Minority Groups Branch of the Labor Division, War Production Board), it represents the government's chief means of combating racial discrimination in employment. And just now, when its role in the war effort is more important than ever, the FEPC is rapidly becoming a stormy petrel of the Roosevelt administration.

The immediate occasion for the establishment of the FEPC was last summer's threatened "March on Washington" by thousands of irate Negro citizens bent on dramatizing their resentment over exclusion from defense employment. The more fundamental motivation, however, lay in the political and economic necessities of the moment. The nation was rapidly approaching war. At a time when the government sorely needed the support of large masses of citizens for a foreign policy that was under serious fire, it could ill afford to risk a demonstration which might further crystallize the antagonism of 14,000,000 Negro Americans. At a time when current and anticipated war production requirements called for the fullest possible use of the nation's manpower, some means simply had to be found to utilize the vast and essential reservoir of Negro labor. Further, at precisely this turning point in world history—late June 1941—the whole character of the war was altered by the Nazi attack upon the USSR and the resultant, although belated, forging of Anglo-American-Soviet unity against the common foe. The bold outlines of a people's war for freedom immediately began to emerge.

Thus, however consistent his action may have been with other motivations, the President was responding to historic necessity when, on June 25, 1941, he issued Executive Order 8802. The order declared "the policy of the United States to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders." To implement this policy the order also established the Committee on Fair Employment Practice. This historic development may properly be regarded as one of the first concrete manifestations of the progressive nature of the war.

THE FEPC was originally established in the Office of Production Management (now War Production Board) as a more or less autonomous entity, deriving its funds from and responsible directly to the President. On July 31, 1942, however, during the hornet's-nest of reactions stirred up by the FEPC's "invasion" of the South at the Birmingham hearings, the committee was transferred to the War Manpower Commission, under the supervision and direction of Chairman Paul V. McNutt, but with the provision that it would continue to operate as an organic unit.

It still is not clear just how the FEPC's transfer to the War Manpower Commission will affect its work. Heretofore, the committee had been authorized to investigate alleged violations of Executive Order 8802, to "take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds to be valid," and to "recommend to the several departments and agencies of the government of the United States and to the President all measures which may be deemed by it necessary or proper to effectuate the provisions of this order." It would appear, theoretically at least, that the War Manpower Commission has administrative power to take direct action which the FEPC alone has



From the pamphlet *The Negro and the War*

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lacked, and that the transfer might, in fact, operate more effectively to implement the committee's purposes.

On the other hand, by virtue of its status in the War Manpower Commission, the committee is now subject to the supervision and direction of an executive who also has jurisdiction over several other agencies (e.g., the US Office of Education and US Employment Service) against which the FEPC may find it —indeed, has already found it—necessary to take action. This structural arrangement may one day prove embarrassing to the committee —or to the chairman of the WMC. Further, although the committee and its central staff continue to maintain separate offices and to operate as an organic unit, its field representatives are to be directly responsible to the several regional directors of the War Manpower Commission. There may be WMC regional directors in certain areas who prefer a not too vigorous performance of duty by FEPC field representatives.

The original personnel of the committee, augmented by its present chairman, is aptly representative of those elements in our society which may well be expected to attack with vigor the war problem with which FEPC is concerned. Included are two white and one Negro representatives of organized labor, liberal white representatives of a famous southern newspaper and a great manufacturing concern, an able Negro lawyer holding an important elective office in Chicago, and the progressive white president of a famous Negro college.

THREE major approaches have been used by the FEPC in its effort to uproot employment discrimination based on "race, creed, color, or national origin": (1) public hearings on discriminations by industrialists and trade unions working on war production contracts; (2) private hearings on discriminations by agencies of the federal government; and (3) investigations of individual complaints alleging discriminations.

During the past year, the FEPC has held four public hearings on employment discrimination by industrial establishments: in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Birmingham. Reports of the Birmingham hearings are not yet available. In the other three, responsible representatives of thirty or more industrial concerns—aircraft (more than any other), foundry, automotive, shipbuilding, radio and television, construction, etc.—were called before the committee to answer charges based largely upon investigations by field agents of the committee.

With monotonous regularity, "the committee finds that the corporation has engaged in discriminatory employment practices . . ." involving Negroes, Jews, Mexicans, Orientals, or foreign-born citizens and aliens. It then "directs" the company (in most cases): (1) to institute and establish hiring, upgrading, and promotional procedures which will insure the employment of workers in line with the principles of Executive Order 8802"; (2) to "employ applicants without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin and to extend its in-plant training to all qualified employees"; (3) to "file with the committee a monthly report" on the number, classification, and racial composition of new workers and on the upgrading of those already employed; and (4) to "give written notice to all employment agencies to which they submit orders . . . advising that the company will employ applicants for all classifications of employment without regard to race, creed, color, or na-

Necessities of a People's War

THERE are still invidious cases of discrimination which cause a great deal of dissatisfaction among American Negroes and provocation to ill will. But the question of whether this is the "white man's war" or the "colored man's war" has to be displaced by the unequivocal fact that this is a people's war.

Such unprecedented events as the Anglo-Soviet Pact, the Roosevelt-Molotov agreements, worldwide sympathetic response to securing India's fullest cooperation against the Axis, and universal demands for the opening of a second military front in Europe show beyond doubt that this is a people's war. They show that the national existence and freedom of all peoples and nations, big and small, including the United States, as well as the fate of the Negro people, rest upon a people's victory of the United Nations over the fascist regimes.

The mad drive of Hitler and his vassals in the Caucasus and the Stalingrad area, with nine-tenths of the Nazi military potential concentrated in Russia, presents an opportunity—an obligatory opportunity—for the United States and Great Britain to strike in western Europe now. The Nazi hordes are pushing to a decision the fate of all humanity. The Red Army and the heroic Soviet people are fighting almost alone. We face the possibility of a prolonged and costly war in human life and resources. If we are to score a victory over fascism and avoid disaster, all liberty-loving people of the world are required to take a more active part in the struggle. An adjustment of the Negro people's policies to this stern reality is the steadfast necessity of the moment. Negro citizens, in the interests of their own freedom and in the interests of liberty for all humanity, a cause in which they have never lagged, must throw their full weight behind the necessity of opening a second front and strengthening the fight to smash Hitler now.

This national liberation war with its many-sided people's character has brought about changes of decisive historical nature in the position of the Negro people and in their potentialities for influencing the course of victory. Many limitations that prevented full "mobilization for the war" have been removed. This course of events shows that the Negro people must to the maximum extent throw their united strength behind President Roosevelt and the pro-war, anti-fascist forces to WIN THE WAR.

They must use their power to repel the defeatists and those who seek to negotiate a peace with Hitler. The defeatists are bending all efforts in the South to obstruct the war effort at its most vulnerable point, to weaken national unity as a whole, and to hold back the upward progress of both the Negro and white people of the South.

Under the pressure of the democratic demands of this war Eugene Talmadge was overwhelmingly defeated in the primary elections for governor in the state of Georgia. With that defeat, opposition to President Roosevelt's war program and Talmadge's "white supremacy" movement were delivered a smashing blow in Georgia.

Likewise under the compulsion of the people's character of the war, the House of Representatives of the United States Congress voted five to one to pass the Soldiers Vote Bill, cancelling restrictions of the poll tax against Negro and white soldiers of the South. This wedge in the armor of the defeatists and poll-tax congressmen opens the way for the abolition of the poll tax altogether. As another example, we can note the launching of the merchant ship *Booker T. Washington* and the placing of a Negro captain, Hugh Mulzac, in full charge of its operation.

These instances of the pressure of the war and achievement of democratic rights in the course of the war cut deeply into American life. They are bringing into political and social activity millions of hitherto disfranchised citizens of the South. The profound lesson to be learned from these developments is that this is a people's war, and by full participation in its victorious conclusion and the peace that will come out of it, the Negro people will see the achievement of full historical justice.

JAMES W. FORD.

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tional origin, copies of such notices to be transmitted to the committee."

Information as to how fully these specific "directives" are carried out is not at hand. Members of the FEPC staff are somewhat reticent on the subject. There is reason to believe that "token compliance" is all that results in many instances. Besides, the committee's authority to *compel* compliance directly has yet to be validated by the courts. Despite the limitations here apparent, there is no doubt that FEPC public hearings are having a wholesome effect upon industrial employment practices. It is noteworthy that not a single company has openly challenged the committee. None has said: "Yes, we discriminate. So what?" Rather, industrial representatives either try to "prove" that their firms do not discriminate, or they frankly admit such discrimination and promise to eradicate it from their employment practices.

One of the most significant reactions to FEPC public hearings was that of the Employers Association of Chicago. In its newsletter "To Our Members and Friends," dated Jan. 28, 1942—one week after the hearings—there was enclosed, in red print, a sheet bearing the caption "WARNING." Immediately under the caption, in bold type, is the statement: "Employers engaged in defense work, under primary or subcontracts, must not discriminate in employment because of race, creed, color, or national origin." There follows the explanation that "such discrimination is contrary to law by the terms of President Roosevelt's 'Executive Order 8802' "; then an admonition that the recent "hearings should be a warning signal for employers to guard against even the appearance of discrimination"; and finally this valid and apparently sincere analysis of the situation: "A realistic appraisal of the war emergency . . . makes it clear that the services of every brain and every muscle will be required. . . . Simple arithmetic indicates that employment discrimination will be swept aside by the acute necessity for workers, more workers, all workers." The common objection that the attitudes of employees force employers to discriminate is countered by the assertion: ". . . it is now the job of employers to influence their employees toward sacrificing such prejudices as a matter of patriotic necessity." The statement closes by listing several "specific cautions to employers to avoid violation of 'Executive Order 8802.' "

The Employers Association of Chicago, now in its fortieth year, serves nearly 2,000 employers annually. Such a call by this group for compliance with the government's policy goes far, in itself, toward validating FEPC public hearings in that area.

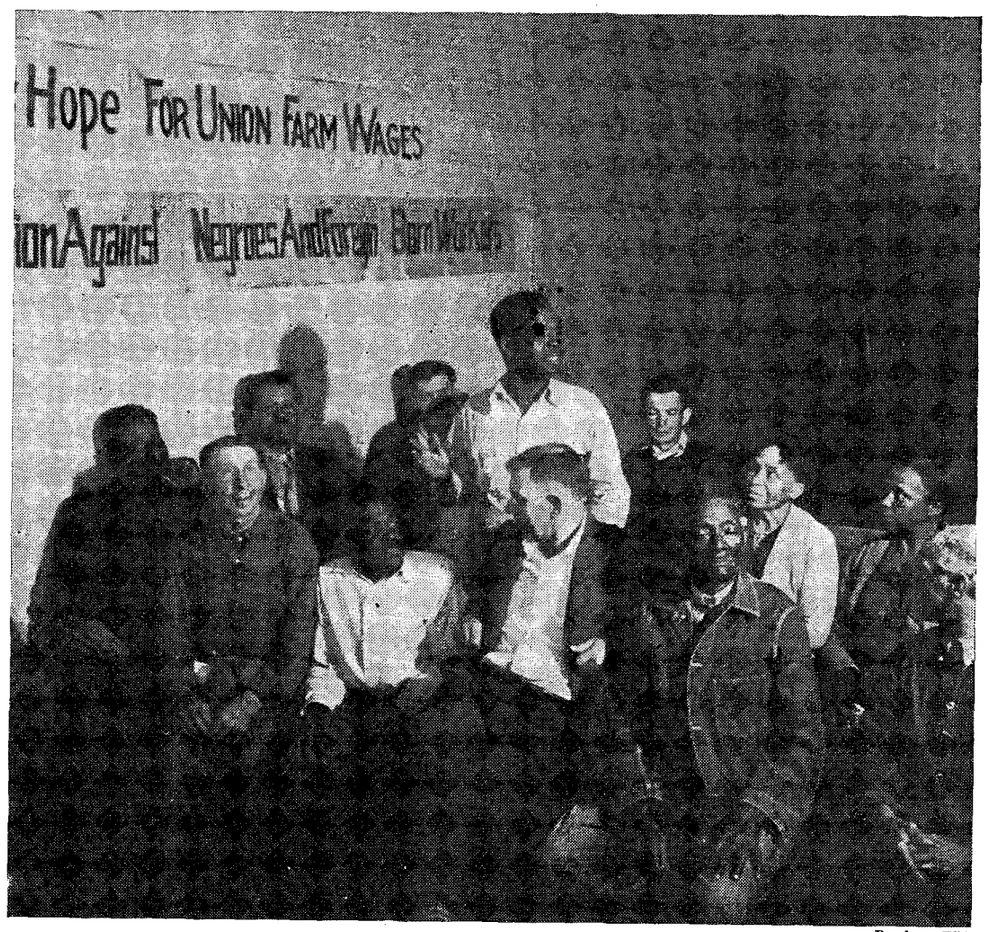
DURING the public hearings at Los Angeles, and in supplementary hearings in Chicago, at least five trade unions have been cited before FEPC for barring Negroes from employment by denying them membership and refusing to certify them for work under closed shop or "maintenance of membership" agreements with employers. Attention has already been called to the plumbers' and the steamfitters' locals in Chicago. Also involved in public hearings were the International Association of Machinists, Local 68, San Francisco, and Local 751, Seattle, together with the Shipyard Workers Union, Local 802, of San Pedro, Cal.

The West Coast machinists' unions presented the first overt challenge to the FEPC's authority. They flatly refused to abrogate their traditional bar to the employment of any but "white" machinists. The committee referred their cases to the President, who acted promptly and decisively, with the result that the Negro machinists gained employment. FEPC's chairman told the recent convention of the National Association for the advancement of Colored People that "at least three local lodges of the International Association of Machinists, one of the most powerful of AFL unions, have found ways to admit Negroes into full membership, thus breaking with long, long years of tradition. In one midwestern city the machinists count eighty-five Negroes as full-fledged members; in a northeastern city there are fifteen who have held their machinists' membership cards for about two years; in the South one lodge has explored the dictionaries and come up with the discovery that being 'white' may not, necessarily, mean white of race or in color; instead, 'white' may also be defined as 'pure,' 'innocent,' 'honorable,' 'of good character,' and so forth. As a result, a Negro could be admitted to membership without violating tradition or ritual, as long as he was a competent machinist and a man well behaved and of good character."

Spokesmen for organized labor—especially the industrial unions of the CIO—generally cooperate with the FEPC in seeking to uproot discrimination by employers. Gradually, even traditional craft union foes of Negro skilled workers are relaxing their bars. Quite apart from the patriotic motives involved, organized labor is coming to grasp the even more general application of a fundamental truth stated by a CIO representative in Bessemer, Ala.: "The labor movement in the South never will amount to a hill of beans until unions are prepared squarely to face and solve the Negro problem." There remain a few recalcitrants, however, who persist in obstructing the nation's total mobilization for war production and thus negate the best interests of the labor movement itself. The Chicago plumbers and steamfitters are an example.

APPARENTLY on the premise that dirty federal linen should not be washed in public, FEPC hearings on employment discrimination by governmental agencies have all been held in private. These hearings, however, definitely are getting results.

It is reported that in several instances department heads, themselves, were unaware of the extent of racial discrimination in the employment practices of their own agencies until



Rosskam, FSA

Pulling together. Decent wages and an end to discrimination are what these Negro and white union agricultural workers want in order to produce the maximum food for victory.

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confronted with FEPC findings. Corrective measures were promptly instituted. Last April, the FEPC called upon more than eighty governmental departments and independent agencies to submit periodic progress reports on the numbers and classifications of Negroes employed, together with their proportions of the total. The vast majority of the agencies have complied with this request, some of their reports revealing striking increases in Negro employment. During the past six months, for example, the Department of Agriculture increased its Negro personnel by about forty percent—at a time when total personnel decreased by nearly eight percent. (Even so, Negroes still constitute less than four percent of the Department's 12,000 or more employees.) The Navy Department reports an increase of 105 percent among Negroes, as compared with thirty-six percent among whites. From October 1941 through March 1942, Negro employees accounted for sixteen percent of the total increase in War Department personnel.

Despite such increases as these, there are still a number of departments with but negligible numbers of Negro employees. The main problem, however, lies in the occupational caste lines which generally restrict Negroes to custodial jobs. For example, in thirty-eight agencies employing over 171,000 workers, there are approximately 16,000 Negro employees (nine percent of the total), only one-fourth of whom hold clerical, administrative, or professional classifications. Whereas service employees constitute about seven percent of the total in these agencies, sixty-two percent of the Negro employees hold custodial classifications. This disproportionate and general concentration of Negro employees in custodial jobs, together with the dearth of Negro employees of any kind in certain agencies, is strikingly revealed by the incomplete tabulations in the box on this page. It is apparent that, whatever progress has thus far been made, there still remains a big job for the FEPC within the family of federal agencies.

A LARGE part of the committee's work consists of the handling of individual complaints alleging racial discrimination in employment. More than 6,000 such complaints were filed with the committee during the fiscal year ended June 30, 1942, and the committee is now receiving 700 and 800 per month. It is significant that the bulk of these individual complaints come from the North and West, where there are relatively few Negroes, and very few from the South. Out of approximately 3,300 complaints received during the first six months of 1942, more than 2,500 (seventy-seven percent) came from eight northern industrial states and the District of Columbia, as compared with only about 500 (fifteen percent) from fifteen southern states where nearly four-fifths of the entire Negro population lives. This distribution reflects, in part, the greater concentration of war production industries in the North. To a considerable extent, however, it also expresses—as many of the letters are frank to state—the greater intimidation of Negro citizens in the southern areas. Long experience has taught Negroes in much of the South that to tell Washington about their grievances is to invite serious reprisals when the word finally gets back to the local community. Thus, the very dearth of complaints from the South is perhaps the most damning indictment of its racial discriminations.

Just what has happened to the thousands of complaints received thus far, it appears that the committee itself does not know. Although the chairman reports optimistically that "hundreds of grievances have been settled out of court," it is probable that in most cases letters of complaint are duly answered, and then filed. The small central staff now employed is hard pressed even to keep a record of such complaints, let alone to investigate them and effect adjustments. Besides, most of the complaints received merely allege employment discrimination "in general," with few if any particulars as to dates, places, names, and incidents. In themselves, they provide no adequate basis for definite action, even if sufficient staff and authority were at the committee's command.

ALTHOUGH the FEPC's program suffers from obvious limitations, the net effect of its activities during the fifteen months since the committee was appointed has undoubtedly been salutary. In all four areas of operation, some definite gains have been made. Perhaps most notable has been the focusing of attention upon a deep-rooted problem which seriously imperils the nation, and the development of a climate of opinion in which the solution of that problem becomes much more practical. Outside of the South, the *principle* that "minority" peoples should be afforded full employment in war production is pretty well established. Progressive groups which have long been concerned with this problem can now move forward with greater assurance of public support. This fact, for which the FEPC is entitled to considerable credit, in itself marks an important gain.

It is abundantly apparent that the main job of the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee lies ahead. Despite rapid diminution of the normally "acceptable" supply of industrial workers, Negroes and other "colored" Americans still constitute less than three percent of the employees in eighteen important war industries selected for special analysis by the Bureau of Employment Security. Their numbers are especially negligible in certain industries (e.g., ship and boat building, aviation, machinery, etc.) where developing wartime shortages are particularly acute. In federal employment the record has already been set forth. And still "native white," "gentile," "Christian" remain the employment criteria of hundreds of concerns whose maximum production is essential for victory.

Just now the United Nations are on the verge of their supreme bid for victory. An offensive in Western Europe *cannot* be much longer delayed. At this crucial point in our history, stupid intolerances which imperil the nation can no longer be dealt with gently. They must be blasted by the force of a people's march toward freedom. And the FEPC must be made into an even more effective instrument to this end. To do the job which *must* be done, the committee needs much strengthening and stimulation. Its central staff and especially its corps of field workers must be greatly enlarged. Its jurisdiction—recently extended to include railroads—must be further broadened to encompass basic communication agencies, the government of the District of Columbia, and all other agencies and areas of employment which are vital to the war effort. The committee must be given clear legislative authority (such as the Marcantonio Anti-Discrimination Bill would provide) to impose sanctions which will insure that its "directives" are obeyed. Above all, the committee must be prodded into ever more militant and vigorous attack. DOXEY A. WILKERSON.

Federal Agency	*Number of Employees*		*No. of Negroes Classified as:*	
	Total	***Negro***	***Custodial***	***Clerical or Above***
Civil Service Commission	6,113	265	97	168
Bureau of the Budget	422	17	17	0
Civilian Aeronautics Administration	7,567	46	44	2
Federal Housing Administration	..	22	18	4
Department of the Interior	42,126	693	..	166
National Labor Relations Board	897	12	..	..
Office of Education	693	32	20	12
Securities & Exchange Commission	1,499	12	11	1
Selective Service System (D. C.)	455	11	..	..
U. S. Maritime Commission (D. C.)	2,089	39	..	..
Reconstruction Finance Corp.	5,073	98	..	..
Office for Emergency Mgt.	5,283	493	..	38
Department of Commerce	..	412	281	131
Alley Dwelling Authority	..	85	68	17
Library of Congress	..	183	128	55
Postmaster General (D. C.)	..	212	..	..
Social Security Board	..	1,050	178	872
Bureau of Internal Revenue	..	261	..	105
Bureau of Public Debt	..	467	164	303

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THE WAY IT IS

Wilbur's in the Army, Mary can't get a job. "If it wasn't so serious, I'd break down and laugh," says Mrs. Jackson. Ralph Ellison's profile of Harlem.

RALPH ELLISON wanted to continue his study of music, which he began as a youngster. He had knocked around as a waiter, elevator boy, dental assistant, after finishing high school in Oklahoma City, where he was born twenty-eight years ago. He finally wound up in New York where he met Langston Hughes and Richard Wright. Since then, he's been writing stories and literary criticism for "Direction," "New Masses," and the "Negro World." O'Brien's "Best American Short Stories, 1941" mentioned his work. Ellison is now managing editor of the "Negro Quarterly."

THE boy looked at me through the cracked door and stood staring with his large eyes until his mother came and invited me in. It was an average Harlem apartment, cool now with the shift in the fall weather. The room was clean and furnished with the old-fashioned furniture found so often up our way, two old upholstered chairs and a divan upon a faded blue and red rug. It was painfully clean, and the furniture crowded the narrow room.

"Sit right there, sir," the woman said. "It's where Wilbur use to sit before he went to camp, its pretty comfortable."

I watched her ease herself tiredly upon the divan, the light from the large red lamp reflected upon her face from the top of a mirrored side table.

She must have been fifty, her hair slightly graying. The portrait of a young soldier smiled back from the top of a radio cabinet beside her.

She pointed: "That's my boy Wilbur right there," she said proudly. "He's a sergeant."

"Wilbur's got a medal for shooting so good," the boy said.

"You just be quiet and go eat your supper," she said. "All you can think about is guns and shooting." She spoke with the harsh tenderness so often used by Negro mothers.

The boy went, reluctantly opening the door. The odor of peas and rice and pork chops drifted through.

"Who was it, Tommy?" shrilled a voice on the other side.

"You two be quiet in there and eat your supper now," Mrs. Jackson called. "Them two just keeps my hands full. They just get into something *all* the time. I was coming up the street the other day and like to got the fright of my life. There was Tommy hanging on the back of a streetcar! But didn't I tan his bottom! I bet he won't even *look* at a streetcar for a long, long time. It ain't really that he's a *bad* child, it's just that he tries to do what he sees the other boys do. I wanted to send both him and his sister away to camp for the summer, but things was so tight this year that I couldn't do it. Raising kids in Harlem nowadays is more than a notion."

As is true so often in Negro American life, Mrs. Jackson, the mother, is the head of her family. Her husband had died several years ago; the smaller children were babies. She had kept going by doing domestic work and had kept the family together with the help of the older boy.

There is a quiet courage about Mrs. Jackson. And yet, now and then the clenching and unclenching of her work-hardened fingers betray an anxiety that does not register in her face. I offer to wait until after she has eaten, but she says no, that she is too tired right now and she would rather talk than eat.

"You finding the writing business any better since the war?" she asked.

"I'm afraid not," I said.

"Is that so? Well, I don't know nothing about the writing business. I just know that don't many colored go in for it. But I guess like everything else, some folks is doing good while others ain't. The other day I was over on 126th Street and saw them dispossessing a lawyer! Yes, sir, it was like back in the thirties. Things piled all over the sidewalk, the Negroes a-hanging out of the windows, and the poor man rushing around trying to get his stuff off the streets before it got dark, and everything."

I remembered the incident myself, having passed through the street that afternoon. Files, chest of drawers, bedsteads, tables, and barrels had been piled along the sidewalk; with pink, blue, and white mattresses and bundles of table linen and bed clothing piled on top. And the crowd had been as she described: some indignant, some curious, and all talking in subdued tones so as not to offend the evicted family. Law books had been piled upon the sidewalk near where a black and white kitten —and these are no writer's details—played games with itself in the coils of an upright bed springs. I told her I had seen the incident.

"Lord," she said. "And did you see all those law books he had? Looks like to me that anybody with all those books of law oughtn't to never get dispossessed.

"I was dispossessed, myself, back in thirty-seven, when we were all out of work. And they threatened me once since Wilbur's been in the Army, but I stood up for my rights and when the government sent the check we pulled through. Anybody's liable to get dispossessed though." She said it defensively.

"Just how do you find it otherwise?" I asked.

"Things is mighty tight, son. . . . You'll have to excuse me for calling you 'son,' because I suspect you must be just about Wilbur's age."

She sat back abruptly. "How come you not in the Army?" she asked.

"I've a wife and dependents," I said.

"I see." She pondered. "Wilbur would have got married too, but he was helping me with the kids."

"That's the way it goes," I said.

"Things is tight," she said again. "With food so high and everything I sometimes don't know what's going to happen. Then too, with Wilbur in the Army we naturally misses the money he use to bring in."

She regarded me shrewdly, "So you want to know about how we're doing? Don't you live in Harlem?"

"Oh, yes, but I want to know what *you* think about it."

"So's you can write it up?"

"Some of it, sure. But I won't use your name."

"Oh I don't care bout that. I *want* them to know how I feel."

SHE became silent. Then, "You didn't tell me where you live, you know," she said cagily. I had to laugh and she laughed too.

"I live up near Amsterdam Avenue," I said.

"You telling me the truth?"

"Honest."

"And is your place a nice one?"

"Just average. You know how they go," I said.

"I bet you live up there on Sugar Hill."

"Not me," I said.

"And you're sure you're not one of these investigators?"

"Of course not."

"I bet you are too," she smiled.

I shook my head and she laughed.

"They always starting something new," she said. "You can't keep up with them."

But now she seemed reassured and settled down to talk, her hands clasped loosely in her lap against the checkered design of her dress.

"Well we're carrying on somehow. I'm still working and I manage to keep the younguns in school, and I pays the rent too. I guess maybe it would be a little better if the government would send the checks on time. . . ."

She paused and pointed across the room to the picture of a young woman:

"And it would be even better if Mary, that's my next oldest after Wilbur—if she could get some of that defense training so she could get a job what pays decent money. But don't look like she's going to get anything. She was out

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to the Western Electric plant in Kearny, New Jersey, the other day and they give her some kind of test, but that was the end of that."

"Did she pass the test?" I asked.

"Sure she passed. But they just put her name down on a card and told her they would keep her in mind. They always do that. They ask her a lot of questions, then they want to know if she ever had any experience in running machines and when she says she ain't, they just take down her name. Now where is a colored girl going to get any experience in running all these kinds of machines they never even seen before?"

When I could not answer she threw up her hands.

"Well, there you have it, they got you any which way you turn. A few gets jobs, but most don't."

"Things are much better outside of New York," I said.

"So I hear," she said. "Guess if I was younger I'd take the kids and move to Jersey or up to Connecticut where I hear there's some jobs for colored. Or even down South. Only I keep hearing about the trouble they're having down there. And I don't want the kids to grow up down there nohow. Had enough of that when I was a kid. . . ."

"Have any of your friends gotten work through the FEPC?"

She thought for a moment.

"No, son. It seems to me that that committee is doing something everywhere but here in New York. Maybe that's why it's so bad for us—and you know it's bad cause you're colored yourself."

As I heard the clatter of dishes coming from the kitchen, her face suddenly assumed an outraged expression.

"Now you take my sister's boy, William. God bless his poor soul. William went to the trade schools and learned all about machines. He got so he could take any kind of machine apart and fix it and put it together again. He was machine crazy! But he was a smart boy and a good boy. He got good marks in school too. But when he went to get a job in one of those factories where they make war machines of some kind, they wouldn't take him cause he was colored—*and they told him so!*"

She paused for breath, a red flush dyeing her skin. The tinted portrait of a brown mother holding a brown, shiny-haired baby posed madonna-like from a calendar above her head.

"Well, when they wouldn't take him some of the folks over to the church told him to take his case to the FEPC, and he did. But they had so many cases and it took so long that William got discouraged and joined up in the Merchant Marine. That poor boy was just so disgusted that he said that he would have enlisted in the Army, only that his mamma's got two little ones like I have. So he went out on that boat cause it paid good money and a good bonus. It was really good money and he helped his mamma a heap, but it didn't last long before one of those submarines sunk the boat."

HER eyes strayed to the window, where a line of potted plants crowded the sill; a profusion of green things, slowly becoming silhouettes in the fading light. Snake plants, English ivy, and others, a potato plant in a glass jar, its vines twining around a cross of wood and its thousand thread-fine roots pushing hungrily against the wall of glass. A single red bloom pushed above the rest, and in one corner a corn plant threatened to touch the ceiling from the floor with its blade-like leaves.

The light was fading and her voice had slipped into the intense detachment of recent grief. "It was just about four months yesterday," she said. "He was such a fine boy. Everybody liked William."

She shook her head silently, her fingers gripping her folded arms as she swallowed tensely.

"It hurts to think about it," she said, getting up and snapping on another light, revealing a child's airplane model beneath the table. "Well, the folks from his union is being very nice to my sister, the whites as well as the colored. And you know," she added, leaning toward me, "it really makes you feel a little better when they come round—the whites ones, I mean—and really tries to help.

From the *People's Voice*, New York Negro newspaper

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Not like some of these ole relief investigators who come in wanting to run your life for you, but really like they interested in you. Something like colored folks in a way. We use to get after William for being with white folks so much, but these sure have shown themselves to be real friends."

She stared at me as though it was a fact she deeply feared to accept.

"Some of them is going to try and see that my sister gets some sort of defense work. But what I'm trying to tell you is that it's a sin and a shame that a fine boy like William had to go fooling round on them ships when ever since he was a little ole boy he'd been crazy bout machines."

"But don't you think that the Merchant Marine is helping to win the war?" I said. "It takes brave men to go out there, and they've done a lot."

"Sure they have," she said. "Sure they have. But I'm not talking about that. Anybody could do what they had him doing on that boat. Anybody can wait tables who's got sense enough to keep his fingernails clean! Waiting tables, when he could *make* things on a machine!

"You see that radio there? Well William made that radio. It ain't no store set, no sir, even though it looks like one. William made it for the kids. Made everything but the cabinet, and you can hear way down to Cuba and Mexico with it. And to think of that boy! Oh, it makes me so mad I don't know what to do! He ought to be here right now helping his mamma and lil brother and sister. But what can you do? You educated, son, you one of our educated Negroes that's been to college and everything. Now you tell me, *what can we do?*" She paused. "I'm a colored woman, and colored women can take it. I can hit the chillies to the subway every morning and stand in the white folk's kitchen all day long, but so much is happening in the world that I don't know which way to turn. First it's my sister's boy and then they sends my own boy down to Fort Bragg. I tells you I'm even afraid to open Wilbur's letters, some of the things he tells is so awful. I'm even afraid to open letters that the *government* sends sometimes about his insurance or something like that, cause I'm afraid it might be a message that Wilbur's been beaten up or killed by some of those white folks down there. Then I gets so mad I don't know what to do. I use to pray, but praying don't do no good. And too, like the union folks was telling us when we was so broken up about William, we got to fight the big Hitler over yonder even with all the little Hitlers over here. I wish they'd hurry up and send Wilbur on out of the country cause then maybe my mind would know some ease. Lord!" she sighed, "if it wasn't so serious I'd break down and laugh at my ownself."

She smiled now and the tension eased from her face and she leaned back against the divan and laughed. Then she became serious again.

"But, son, you really can't laugh about it. Not honestly laugh like you can about some things. It reminds me of that crazy man what's always running up and down the streets up here. You know, the one who's always hollering at the cars and making out like he's throwing bombs?"

"Of course, I've seen him often," I said.

"Sure you have. Well, I use to laugh at that poor man when he'd start acting the fool—you know how it is, you feel sorry for him but you can't help but laugh. They say he got that way in the last war. Well, I can understand him better now. Course I ain't had no bombs bursting in my ears like he had. But yet and still, with things pulling me thisaway and thataway I sometimes feel that I'm going to go screaming up and down the streets just like that poor fellow does."

"He's shell shocked," I said. "Sometimes I've seen him talking and acting just as normal as anyone."

"Is that so?" she said. "I always thought it was funny he never got hit by a car. I've seen them almost hit him, but he goes right back. One day I heard a man say, Lord, if that crazy fellow really had some bombs he'd get rid of every car in Harlem!"

We laughed and I prepared to go.

"Sorry you found me so gloomy today, son. But you know, things have a way of just piling up these days and I just had to talk about them. Anyway, you asked for me to tell you what I thought."

She walked with me to the door. Street lamps glowed on the avenue, lighting the early dark. The after-school cries of children drifted dimly in from the sidewalk.

She shivered close beside me.

"It's getting chilly already," she said. "I'm wondering what's going to happen this winter about the oil and coal situation. These ole holes we have to live in can get mighty cold. Now can't they though?"

I agreed.

"A friend of mine that moved up on Amsterdam Avenue about a month ago wanted to know why I don't move out of Harlem. So I told her it wouldn't do no good to move cause anywhere they let us go gets to be Harlem right on. I done moved round too much not to know that. Oh yes!"

She shook her head knowingly.

"Harlem's like that old song says:

It's so high you can't get over it
So low, you can't get under it,
And so wide, you can't get round it. . . .

"That's the way it really is," she said. "Well goodbye, son."

And as I went down the dimmed-out street the verse completed itself in my mind, *You must come through by the living gate. . . .*

SO THERE you have Mrs. Jackson. And that's the way "it really is" for her and many like her who are searching for that gate of freedom. In the very texture of their lives there is confusion, war-made confusion. And the problem is to get around, over, under, and through this confusion. They do not ask for a lighter share of necessary war sacrifices than other Americans have to bear. But they do ask for equal reasons to believe that their sacrifices are worth while, and they *do* want to be rid of the heavy resentment and bitterness which has been theirs for long before the war.

Forced in normal times to live at standards much lower than those the war has brought to the United States generally, they find it emotionally difficult to give their attention to the war. The struggle for existence constitutes a war in itself. The Mrs. Jacksons of Harlem offer one of the best arguments for the stabilization of prices and the freezing of rents. For twenty-five percent of those still on relief come from our five percent of New York's population. Mrs. Jackson finds it increasingly difficult to feed her children. She must pay six cents more on the dollar for food than do the mothers of similar-income sections of the city. And with the prospect of a heatless winter, Harlem, with its poor housing and high tuberculosis death rate, will know an increase of hardship.

It is an old story. Touch any phase of urban living in our democracy and its worst aspects are to be found in Harlem. Our housing is the poorest, and our rents the highest. Our people are the sickest, and Harlem Hospital the most overcrowded and understaffed. Our unemployment is the greatest, and our cost of food the most exorbitant. Our crime the most understandable and easily corrected, but the policemen sent among us the most brutal. Our desire to rid the world of fascism the most burning, and the obstacles placed in our way the most frustrating. Our need to see the war as a struggle between democracy and fascism the most intense, and our temptation to interpret it as a "color" war the most compelling. Our need to believe in the age of the "common man" the most hope-inspiring, and our reasons to doubt that it will include us the most disheartening (this is no Whitmanesque catalogue of democratic exultations, while more than anything else we wish that it could be). And that's the way it is.

Many of Mrs. Jackson's neighbors are joining in the fight to freeze rents and for the broadening of the FEPC, for Negroes and all other Americans. Their very lives demand that they back the President's stabilization program. That they must be victorious is one of the necessities upon which our democratic freedom rests. The Mrs. Jacksons cannot make the sacrifices necessary to participate in a total war if the conditions under which they live, the very ground on which they must fight, continues its offensive against them. Nor is this something to be solved by propaganda. Morale grows out of realities, not out of words alone. Only concrete action will be effective—lest irritation and confusion turn into exasperation, and exasperation change to disgust and finally into anti-war sentiment (and there is such a danger). Mrs. Jackson's reality must be democratized so that she may clarify her thinking and her emotions. And that's the way it really is.

RALPH ELLISON.

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THE NOT SO SOLID SOUTH

President Roosevelt leads the Democratic Party but does its southern wing follow? Earl Browder's fourth article traces the battle of southern liberalism against the poll tax and "white supremacy."

THE main currents of public life in the United States continue to develop within the channels of the traditional two-party system, through the Republican and Democratic parties. There is no immediate prospect of a fundamental change in the formal aspects of this political system.

Beneath the surface appearance of two long-standing rival political parties representing conflicting programs for the country, however, the realities of life are not so static. On the contrary, most profound changes are taking place. The institutionalized party structure, preserved by tradition and habit, as well as by its being imbedded in statutory law, furnishes only the shell within which the political life of the country evolves. And within each major party structure all political currents and ideas find expression, some more, some less, without much apparent system or coherence. The apparent simplicity of American politics hides a complexity equal to that of any other country.

There is a certain arbitrariness, therefore, in dealing with our national politics by examining the Republican and Democratic parties separately. It is apparent to every student that the real political forces in our country, engaged in struggle to determine the policies of the nation, cut across all party lines; that in the political battles that take place, the party structure serves only as a sort of fixed fortification sometimes occupied by one side, sometimes by another; in some places by the one, in other places by the other. The structures themselves furnish no reliable guide to the battle lines.

This is especially true in relation to the problems of national unity and the policies required for victory. Party labels come to mean less and less. No firm attitude permeates either the Republican or the Democratic Party, whether they be examined nationally, regionally, by states, or locally, on any of the questions of the day.

UNQUESTIONABLY the Democratic Party, which is the administration party, gathering over twenty-seven million votes in the 1940 elections for President Roosevelt, is the chief factor in the matter of national unity, in so far as political parties are concerned. It not only retains the backing of a great national majority but it also furnishes the chief political foundations for the wartime administration, the most important organizational strongholds and rallying centers for the broadest national unity. At the same time, however, it must be noted that the Democratic Party contains within itself some of the most damaging Fifth Column forces, that by its reliance upon the "solid South" of poll tax and "white superiority" it is resting upon a dangerously rotten foundation, and that it is honeycombed with defeatist and appeaser elements busily conspiring behind the scenes against an all-out drive for victory in the war.

The most important single factor in the Democratic Party is, of course, the man who is Commander-in-Chief of the potentially strongest nation on earth, and thereby one of the most important factors in the world situation—President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

IN THE period of fatal confusions, from the end of 1939 to the first half of 1941, I have spoken and written many bitter words of criticism against President Roosevelt. Since those words are, at this moment, being recalled as obstacles in the way of complete national unity, I am forced to deal with them again, at a time when I would much prefer to devote myself exclusively to the present necessity of strengthening the hands of our Commander-in-Chief for the tasks of this historic moment of crisis. Therefore, I perforce must review the past in order to establish a perspective which will help disarm those enemies who desire for one or another special reason to perpetuate the old confusions into the present.

From early in 1936, American Communists developed a positive appreciation of President Roosevelt and his role in the worldwide struggle against Nazism. Our earlier suspicions against him, because of the late Gen. Hugh Johnson's dominant role with his half-baked fascist ideology, had been dissipated by Johnson's dismissal from his position as advisor to the President and head of the NRA. We were further stimulated by the emergence of a clearly defined anti-Roosevelt movement of a fascist-Nazi character in the Liberty League. In 1936, as the Communist candidate for the Presidency, I conducted a campaign designed to help build up Roosevelt's vote rather than that of my own party, because of the thinly disguised fascist character of his opposition, which we considered the main danger to our country.

In 1937 the Communist Party was the only national political organization of any kind which unitedly supported President Roosevelt. The issues of that year were: the fight about the Supreme Court, and the President's Chicago speech advocating "quarantine of the aggressor nations." The President's own party deserted him on both issues, and even the liberals deserted him on the "quarantine" issue, which was the issue of "collective security."

In 1938 American Communists were among the most aggressive and consistent supporters of the President. Within this support, for the first time in three years, we had to include a sharp note of criticism against his abandonment of the Spanish republic, and against allowing his lieutenants to claim for him "credit" for the Munich betrayal.

In 1939 American Communists strengthened their support of the President. On September 1, when the war broke out, our National Committee was meeting in Chicago, with 650 members and delegates from forty-eight states, the central object of its deliberations being how to help elect President Roosevelt for a third term. As late as September 11 our party addressed itself to the President in his support.

In October 1939 we came out in opposition to the President against the hostile attitude rising in Washington toward the Soviet Union. We considered this a mistake disastrous to the national interests of our own country. And when Washington actively supported Baron von Mannerheim, Hitler's present willing vassal, the break between American Communists and the President became complete for eighteen months. The very moment when Churchill and Roosevelt joined in that great turn which reversed the anti-Soviet policy, and took the road which has resulted in the mighty construction of the United Nations, American Communists were in the most energetic support of the President again.

THAT is the record. I do not wish at this time to argue again the merits of the old disagreements, on either side. It is sufficient for this argument to establish the fact that American Communists since 1935 subordinated their own special program to the support of the domestic and international policies of President Roosevelt, seeing in them the only hope of orderly and peaceful development of our country and the world. When we broke with the President, it was on a principled disagreement as to which direction lay the true interests of the United States. When this disagreement was wiped out by history, by events, we resumed our consistent and effective support of the President.

For us, then, to discuss the problems of national unity, of world policy, or of the Democratic Party as a central factor, from the starting point of the leading role of President Roosevelt, is neither difficult nor "abnormal." The difficult and abnormal period, for us, was that in which the most unfortunate chain of events had thrown us for a time into the position of a "minority opposition."

That which Nicholas Murray Butler said of the Republican Party, that there are millions of Republican voters but no party, could be said with equal truth of the Democratic Party—except for the unifying role of the President which, operating across all party lines, is felt with especial force among traditional and nominal Democrats of all tenden-

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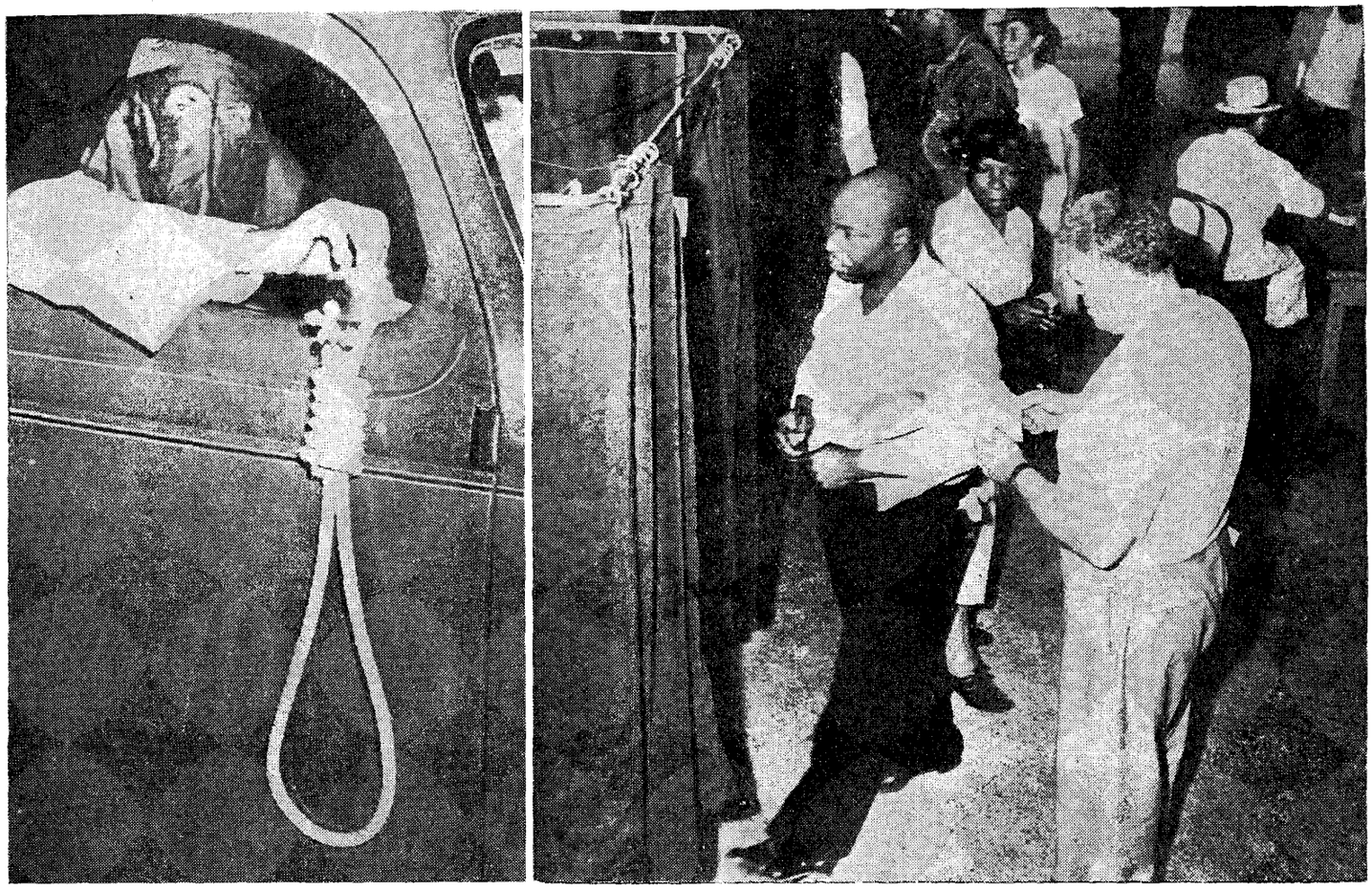

Nazism versus Americanism. On the left, the hood and lynch rope of the KKK, which is now getting the green light from "white supremacy" leaders in Alabama. On the right, Negroes voting, despite KKK intimidation, in Miami, Fla. Florida abolished its poll tax several years ago.

cies because he was elected as a Democratic Party candidate.

The Democratic Party is a tradition inherited from past political struggles. It is a federation of regional interests. It is the channel for newly rising democratic currents among the masses. It is a vested interest of professional political machines. It is an instrument of monopoly capitalism. It is a pioneer of enlightened social and economic policies. It is all these conflicting things, and more—but it is a party only in that special sense, known in this form only in the United States, in which a tradition and name continues formally a unity long departed from real life. The living issues of the day are not fought out between the Democratic and Republican parties, but within both of them. Democratic Party politics are thus the most complex imaginable, and their handling one of the most abstruse and complicated arts. That is why professional politicians speak of Roosevelt admiringly as the "Old Maestro," the only man in two generations able to impart coherence of a sort to that bundle of contradictions known collectively as Democratic Party.

THE deepest and most glaring contradiction is that between the Democratic Party in the North which finds its main mass support in the industrial working class, more and more organized in trade unions and influencing the party, and a "solid South" Democratic Party which is predominantly so reactionary, so medieval in mentality and spirit, as to be almost beyond the comprehension of the rest of the country. This "solid South" Democracy is the most powerful influence in Congress and the government, excepting only the President himself. It is exceedingly self-conscious and self-confident, not to say arrogant; it considers itself the real leader of the country, and it is quite adept in forcing its will upon the rest of the country. It is a degenerate modern caricature of the old South of the Revolution and fifty years after, which gave our country most of its leading statesmen of that time.

This "solid South" is so completely at variance with every enlightened political thought which President Roosevelt has come to symbolize that it is one of the modern mysteries of politics how it ever came about that this South is a chief pillar of the Roosevelt national administration and its power.

Recently, I had the opportunity to study the "solid South" from the inside for fourteen months. Never before had I been permitted so much as to stay overnight on Georgia's soil; the leading newspapers boast about how for years they had forcibly prevented my public appearance in that state. This time I went in with all the powers of the federal government protecting me, and I resided behind the protective shelter of high walls, with hundreds of guards. It was therefore possible for me to study Georgia, the heart of the "solid South," at leisure and in safety—a rare situation. Here are a few of my observations:

The people of Georgia are typical of America, an admirable and lovable people, politically indistinguishable from those of any other state I have known. Their state is backward and obscurantist because the people are excluded from public life, which is the monopoly of a closed corporation of professional politicians. This monopoly maintains itself principally by two mechanisms, the poll tax and "white supremacy"—the oppression of the Negroes as an "inferior race." The poll tax automatically excludes most of the poor people from the franchise, both white and Negro. The "white supremacy" is written into the Georgia constitution and laws. Anyone who questions the supreme validity of this doctrine is ganged-up on and driven out of public life, considering himself lucky if he escapes with his life. Since every reasonably intelligent and decent person does, in his heart, question the validity of "white supremacy," he carefully avoids any public responsibility which would put him on the spot and force him to express himself. Thus the monopoly of the stupid and venal is guaranteed in Georgian government and public life.

A startling example of this process took

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place while I was in Georgia. The whole country has heard about Governor Talmadge's "purge" of the state universities, the arbitrary removal of a number of educators on the charge that they were "conspiring" to break down the state's laws prohibiting coeducation of white and Negro. All America, outside the "solid South," was shocked by this "purge." But I must admit that I was even more shocked by something else, which the country generally missed entirely—and that was the defense of the accused educators. They went before Governor Talmadge and pleaded that they were unjustly accused, that they agreed fully with the governor's doctrine of "white supremacy," and therefore they should be acquitted. In short, they lied themselves blue in the face, for they are intelligent men, and they could not possibly agree with the lynch leader mind of Talmadge. They acted just like Northern liberals when dragged before the Dies committee on the charge of "Communism." And the inevitable result is that the Talmadges rule with a rod of iron, for they are at least bold and frank in their medieval policies, while their opponents are timid, cowardly, hypocritical, and dishonest in a mean and picayune way. And such is the foundation of politics in the "solid South."

This poll tax, "white supremacy" political machine controls most of the key positions in Congress. Senator George of Georgia was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, until the obvious impossibility of handling foreign relations through such a person forced his shift, but recently, to the even more powerful position of chairman of the Finance Committee, where at least he does not deal directly with the colored peoples abroad whom he stigmatizes as "inferior." Our Senate Foreign Relations Committee is still, however, graced with such figures as Senator Reynolds, who openly proclaims his sympathy with the racial doctrines of Hitler, and fraternizes with pro-Nazis. The poll tax representatives are even more vulgar and shameless in their reactionary attitudes than their more polished colleagues of the Senate. Martin Dies is typical of the breed. They are bold and ruthless men like those who put Adolf Hitler at the head of the German nation. And like Germany, Georgia is dotted with prison camps—many of the wardens being men who began their careers as convicts in those same camps, usually for manslaughter or murder. Hardly a week passes without one or several convicts being killed by their guards. The condition of the state is marked by illiteracy, crime, violence, poverty. And in Georgia is the type of poll tax "white supremacy" Democratic Party that dominates Congress.

ONLY in the past few years, since the trade unions have begun to enroll a mass membership in the South, and since national public opinion has begun to turn its spotlight now and then on some of the dark spots there, has there been a slight break in this somber picture.

HOW ABOUT IT, DIXIE?

The President's Four Freedoms
Appeal to me.
I would like to see those Freedoms
Come to be.

If you believe
In the Four Freedoms, too,
Then share 'em with me—
Don't keep 'em all for you.

Show me that you mean
Democracy, please—
Cause from Bombay to Georgia
I'm beat to my knees.

You can't lock up Nehru,
Club Roland Hayes,
Then make fine speeches
About Freedom's ways.

Looks like by now
You ought to know
There's no chance to beat Hitler
Protecting Jim Crow.

Freedom's not just
To be won Over There.
It means Freedom at home, too—
Now—*right here!*

LANGSTON HUGHES.

There is a movement of enlightenment and progress stirring through the South, among white and Negro populations, that reaches down to the grass roots. And already it has found spokesmen, worthy ones, in public life. I will mention a few, even at the risk that Martin Dies and his kind always denounce as "Communists" those for whom I speak a kind word. Sen. Claude Pepper of Florida has displayed a progressive mind and independent spirit that augurs a new day coming in the South. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black has been outstanding in his services to his native South as well as to the nation, in boldly challenging the dominant Southern medievalism. Dr. Frank Graham, president of the University of North Carolina, has built up over years and under most discouraging conditions a powerful center for diffusion of civilization and culture in those benighted regions, helping to make it possible for decent men to begin to speak in public without endangering their lives. Many lesser names could be mentioned, but perhaps I should not endanger the careers of men not yet fully equipped to withstand the inevitable charge of being "Reds" or "fellow travelers" that results from being praised by a Communist. For it is still almost as dangerous in the South as in Germany to be under the charge of being a "Red" or a Communist.

This reactionary "solid South" has long been the "old man of the sea" riding the shoulders of the Democratic Party Sinbad. The Democratic Party can never be an effective instrument of the people until this poll tax "white supremacy" machine is pried loose from its local power which gives it decisive leverage in the nation.

Under the conditions of the present war, which can only be won as a People's War of National Liberation, this "white supremacy" section of the Democratic Party becomes something more serious than an obstacle to progress; it is a positive menace to the war effort, an undermining influence against the United Nations, a destroyer of the confidence of our Allies toward the United States, an obstruction to the war policies of the President, a menace to the national existence of our country, an obstacle to victory.

Can the Democratic Party build the unity of the nation for victory in this war as long as it allows such policies to be followed in its name?

And can the United States lead the twenty-eight United Nations to victory, in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, when key positions in its government are held by men who openly proclaim and practice the doctrine that the "colored" races are inferior, to be held in subjection to the "white race," when a majority of the population of the United Nations are of the "colored races"?

These issues cannot be evaded or glossed over. It is not a contribution to national unity to be silent about them. This is not something that can be postponed in the interests of national unity for victory, for this is of the very essence of democracy, and the remedy of these profound abuses a *precondition for victory.*

This issue of the poll tax "white supremacy" Democratic Party machine in the South is the dominant question in the Democratic Party and its relations to national unity and the war. It is the irrepressible issue. The necessity to solve this question during the present war is the price our nation pays for having left unfinished the work of Abraham Lincoln. For this whole problem is nothing more nor less than the remnants of chattel slavery, too long smugly tolerated by a complacent nation deeply enamored of a temporary material prosperity and grown disdainful of the deeper morality in public questions.

THE central problem of the Democratic Party is thus the question of winning that party, in its entirety, to the policies of Roosevelt and the Atlantic Charter, to give it a local and state leadership which applies those principles to the entire life of the nation. While that problem is not exclusively of the South (witness Senator Wheeler and others), it is above all in the South where the problem is so deep and acute that it threatens not only the life of the Democratic Party and its national administration but endangers the very life of the nation. The Democratic Party must be won to democracy. And that is a problem not alone for Democrats, but for the nation.

EARL BROWDER.

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GENERAL AMES AND HIS NEGRO VOLUNTEERS

"I never doubted their making good soldiers, or the wisdom of arming them. . . ." Letters of a blue-blooded Bostonian, for whom the Civil War was an education.

Photo of General Ames while he was still a captain, and photostat of his letter of t

We are happy to print extracts from the heretofore unpublished letters of a gallant soldier, John Worthington Ames of Massachusetts, who entered the Civil War as a lieutenant and rose steadily until at the war's conclusion he was a brigadier general. General Ames, a descendant of Fisher Ames who was a member of the first Congress under Washington, has been dead for half a century. But his words, as written on the battlefields of the Second American Revolution, have an astonishing immediacy at the present time. These letters are also additional proof, if such proof is needed, that American Negroes have been among the best and bravest of soldiers. On the bloody fields of the Civil War, where carnage sometimes was so great that it was not even equaled during the last World War, Negro troops performed feats of valor and endurance that were unrivaled in the Army of the Potomac, one of the best armies the United States ever put into the field.

John Ames was not a radical. A Harvard graduate, he was a direct descendant of Governor Bradford, the first governor of Massachusetts. He was a conventional man, an American typical of his time and class. But the letters reveal a progression that is characteristic of all progressive wars. When he assumed command of his Negro regiment in August 1863, he was nervous and uncertain. He did not know whether it was the right thing to do and yet he thought he was "believer enough in the cause." But as the war progressed, as the fight of the people continued, as the war showed him that Negroes were in the forefront of the battle of emancipation, Ames' own understanding grew and developed.

Virtually all the letters printed below were written to Ames' mother, who lived in Concord and was a friend of Emerson and Thoreau. Preceding the first excerpt is a newspaper clipping which he enclosed in the letter of Aug. 1, 1863, written in camp near Warrentown, Va. The letters were submitted to "New Masses" by Ames' granddaughter.—THE EDITORS.

Camp near Warrentown, Va.
Aug. 1, 1863.

The First Regiment of Colored United States Volunteers is complete, and another is in process of formation . . . and Capt. John W. Ames, of the Eleventh Regular United States Infantry, has been nominated for the Second. . . . Captain Ames is a graduate of Harvard, a son of Judge Ames of Boston, and grandson of Fisher Ames. The Philadelphia black enlistment movement is a complete success, commanding the hearty approval of loyal people of all classes. . . . *Special dispatch to the New York "Tribune" from Philadelphia, July 23, 1863.*

PLEASE do write at once and let me know if it strikes you as a good thing, and whether you advise me to take it, etc. etc. I believe that I am *believer* enough in the cause and in the black troops, and perhaps competent enough in the lesser military matters, to accept it with propriety and good grace. But I must say it is not pleasant to see one's name in print, and to become notorious (even "famous") is not to my taste somehow or other, particularly in a line which may be intensely repugnant to a large part of the public.

However I think there is now no stigma against the black troops and since they have proved themselves to be as good at all soldierly duties as any others, it perhaps as great an honor to command them as any others. . . . Do you think it would be a position of unenviable notoriety in the John Brown or Lloyd Garrison line—I mean, in the unpleasant features of their notoriety?

Camp near Yorktown, Va.
Dec. 23, 1863.

. . . . You must have seen an account of the dash of cavalry on Charles City Court House, and the capture of some ninety Rebels—as the Richmond paper says of it, "the forces were equally divided, each Yankee took a man; we regret the loss of the horses." You probably saw no mention of the 6th USCT [US Colored Troops] in connection with the affair, though we did about as much marching as any of them. Twenty-four miles from here with much mud-puddle wading and slipping in . . . . soil—it was pretty well done for the first march of the Negroes. I got there in time to examine the ground and to throw out pickets before the darkness came upon us. At one or two o'clock the cavalry came into to our line and the prisoners were turned over to me for a guard. In the morning when they awoke to the complexion of their sentries, great was their wrath at the "niggers" over them, and great the enjoyment of the said "niggers." And I must say, great was my own delight at their indignation and the spectacle of the loyal Negro acting as master of the white traitor. It was worth the long, hard march up there.

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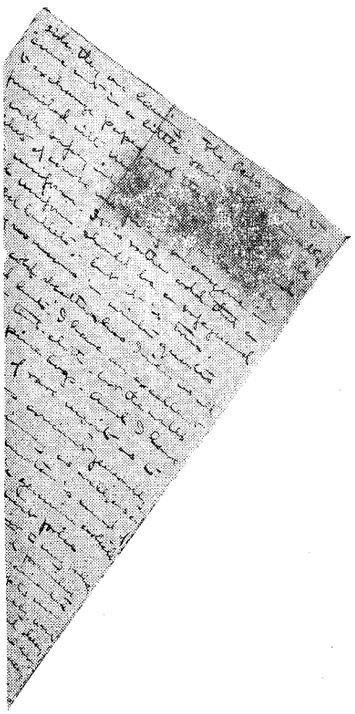

, 1864, quoted on page 18.

An old Civil War print showing Negro troops bringing in a captured battery. Some 200,000 fought to save the Union.

Camp near Yorktown, Va.
Feb.—, 1864.

. . . . I meant to tell you a great deal about my regiment and how much I like it—how soldierly the Negroes have become and how finely they are getting into the usual traces and ways of soldiers. I was delighted to hear of Tom's having become chaplain of a Louisiana regiment; though I only wish I had known there was a chance of his taking it. I should so like to have had him as my chaplain. My officers preferred a white one—but we have now a black one after all. He is very modest and is smart and sincere and conscientious. He was very much elated by my inviting him to tea with me when he first arrived. He is a fine fellow.

Camp near Yorktown, Va.
April 15, 1864.

. . . . You have read of Kilpatrick's great, futile, foolish attempt to capture Richmond, and of the march of certain black troops up the Peninsula from Butler's dept. to meet him. Well, the 6th was a portion of the black brigade mentioned. This was the beginning of our wanderings—the expedition took five days, and we got back at noon one day, and found an order for another march by evening . . . . we—the black brigade—won great fame then by our great marchings. And we *did* do well, though this may be self-praise. There is no resisting facts, however. We made thirty-two miles in one day, beginning at eleven o'clock AM and continuing well into one of the darkest nights that ever was. The white brigade in front straggled, and left their men sprinkled all over the road, but we "niggers" came in at three in the morning with full ranks, and every man to answer to his name. Wiston—impartial and by no means an enthusiast on the colored troops question—spoke strongly in our praise for our marching. And indeed we have proved ourselves very worthy in this respect on all the subsequent marches—so much so that it is now an admitted fact that we can outmarch any troops here. And indeed we can, and I for one am ready to certify that the blacks are *superior* in this respect to the whites—and this, in spite of the loud cry, at first raised by the oppositionists, that it was *one* of the points on which they would most signally fail. The artillery men always laughingly tell our men that they "will kill our horses," and our established nickname on the penninsula is now "the mounted infantry." They are very good troops also in most other respects tho' there are several points in which they differ from whites, in which fact I am inclined to think they are inferior to whites. I don't speak of the fighting, for that I have not seen, and I have every confidence that that is all right but they are less provident, they wear out more clothes and shoes, and it takes more direct supervision to keep them clean, neat, and soldierly. Perhaps because I come from among veterans where all these matters are unusually thorough and well done and see these men as recruits, new and raw and full of the faults of all new troops. However, they improve vastly in all these matters, and I am especially struck by it now on my return from a short absence. They are soldiers at last and I am getting very proud of my regiment. . . .

Camp on James River.
Sept. 6, 1864.

. . . . The Atlanta news was read to the troops—and of course set all to cheering. After it was over came the shout from the Reb pickets, "Say Yanks! What is it? What's the news?" and we roared back joyfully that Atlanta was ours. The Johnnies are very anxious to hear all about it and to know the particulars. Here near us they came out to talk about it, and confessed it was a heavy blow. An Alabama major seemed to think there was no further use in fighting, adding, "well, we are too good friends to fight anyway; but it's with you, as with us; the leaders make the quarrel and we must do it as long as we are in the army." It is funny to see on what good terms our pickets here are, my colored troops and the butternuts! Just as amicable as possible; and the enemy pay the greatest respect for the chevrons of my Negro sergeant-major, address him as "Sir" always, etc. etc. . . .

No. Signal Hill.
Oct. 19, 1864.

. . . . And it occurs to me now that there is even a good side to having the *Courier* [Boston *Courier*] in the house—you will never learn in it of the "nigger troops" being in any action if they are successful, and therefore never be put to any anxiety on my account. I say never as that comes pretty near to the most accurate estimate of the unsuccessful deeds of the Negro troops. It is quite unfortunate for the cavilers and objectors

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to and sneerers at colored troops, but it is nevertheless the fact, that where the Negroes defend they beat off the enemy, that where they assault they carry the enemy's works, and where they meet the enemy they wallop him and put him to flight. Good soldiers or not, they are most *fortunate* soldiers, luck has been on their side if nothing else has. However I did not mean to agitate the Negro question, only to congratulate you that there is a way in which the *Courier,* even, may be doing a benefit to somebody beside the devil and his angels.

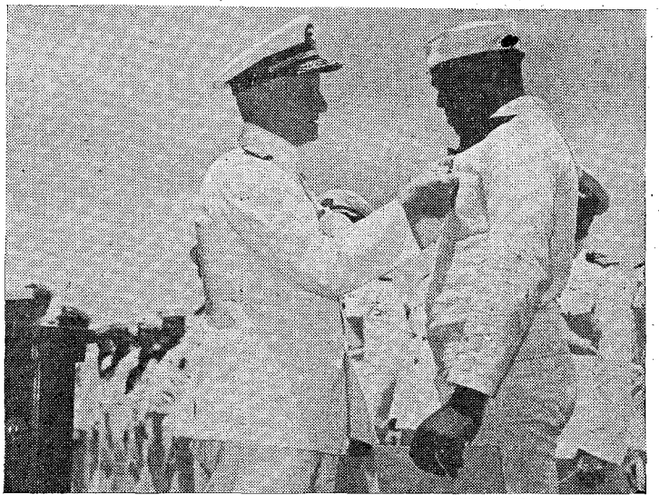
No. Signal Hill, Va.
Oct. 30, 1864.

. . . . Now has just happened another affair which has troubled me very much; I began to think I should not have a friend left if the war went on and I kept alive myself. A few days ago the two first brigades of this Div. went with Weitzel's column in the movement on the right—near the Williamsburg road—while my Brigade—being much reduced by the recent fight—was left to hold the line here. The result of the movement was a simple demonstration against the enemy's works, but one in which we lost unfortunately quite too large a number of men. Two brigades of white troops charged earthworks, suffered severely, and were many of them captured. One brigade of "niggers" charged earthworks in a different place, and carried them (as usual), capturing two guns. That same night almost immediately after the Negro success, the whole column fell back and returned to Deep Bottom. It was only intended as a counteracter to Meade's doings upon the left, and the troops returned of course. But in this little one-horse affair one of the best friends I have was wounded, and the worst of it is I cannot learn how badly. . . . There seems to be a fatality about the "nigger troops"—I cannot understand it yet—how upon earth they always go right bang into an enemy's fort is beyond my understanding. Well, they are *"lucky"*—and they are brave, too.

Chaffin's Farm near Richmond.
Nov. 22, 1864.

. . . .The sun shines very brightly now, everything looks more beautifully bright than it ever has before since the war began. The election was grand—the government's now by all odds the strongest government we have ever had and the strongest any people ever had. There is the utmost confidence and good feeling among the troops, they were never happier or more willing. Fighting's not pleasant in itself, but the privilege of being allowed to fight the war fairly out has brought great joy to all the troops. Rebs are correspondingly depressed; they desert nightly now, tho' it is a marvel how they get through their very stringent lines. The class who desert are the very best, the old soldiers of most intelligence, who can judge of the military prospect and have honestly seen the error of their ways.

First American Negro troops arrive in Northern Ireland.



Official US Navy Photograph
Dorie Miller receives the Navy Cross from Admiral Nimitz.

To see a squad of Rebel prisoners you would think them quite a squalid and wretched and inferior men; to see a squad of deserters you would be struck with their intelligence and manly looks. They actually look like the flower of their army, picked men. Tennessee and Georgia furnish most deserters now.

The Negroes have certainly won a very enviable reputation in the army. Gen'l Weitzel says this Div'n (Paine's Colored) has the most unsullied reputation of any division in the army. . . . They have always repulsed the enemy when he has attacked them, they have always carried the enemy's works and strongholds by assault when they have been led against them, they have captured many pieces of artillery from the enemy and have never lost *one*. Until I joined the Negroes I never saw the enemy's works carried by assault, I never saw guns captured and never knew of captured guns to be used against the enemy; our Negroes have never failed in all these things. Their success has been more than remarkable; they have *made* their reputation against a storm of detraction and a tempest of abuse. They have been carefully watched with the most critical and jealous eyes, more than eager to seize upon the slightest misstep, to magnify the least reverse or failure. There was no reason why they should not have run away as the first white troops did at Bull Run, and yet have made as good soldiers afterwards. But they began with no Bull Run, with no running away, on the contrary the enemy has never even stood before them. The Copperhead papers, finding absolutely nothing to carp at, have ceased to comment at all; nay more, since the mere mention of their deeds, as a matter of news, was the highest of praise, they had even to shut up that item. Poor disappointed *Courer!* Unhappy *Herald!* The Negroes have really done far more than could reasonably have been expected; they have won a grand name and a high place. I never doubted their making good soldiers, or the wisdom of arming them, but I am really surprised at their prowess and success.

I am in command of the brigade now. It is somewhat reduced in numbers, a large share being buried in front of Newmarket Heights.

Chaffin's farm.
Dec. 4. '64.

. . . . Our most important news here is the formation of two new Army Corps out of the 10th and 18th and a part of the 9th. All the white troops of the 10th and 18th Corps are thrown together and constitute the 24th Corps. Gen. Ord commanding. The three black Divisions of the 9th, 10th, and 18th are thrown together and constitute the 25th Corps—Gen. Weitzel commanding. Of the 25th, ours is the 1st Div., Gen. Paine commanding—Gen. Birney commands the 2nd and Gen. Heckman the 3rd. So here we are—a black army corps at last. My address in future is "Comdg. 2nd Brig., 1st Divn., 25th Corps, Army of the James, Va. . . ."

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SOMEPLACE WHERE YOUR SPIRIT'S FREE

Quest of a Negro, educated in the North, teaching in the South. Dialogue with Lebman, the Jewish boy who was also searching. A chapter from J. Saunders Redding's "No Day of Triumph."

J. SAUNDERS REDDING was invited by the University of North Carolina in 1940 to travel through the South and report the realities of Negro life in that region. Mr. Redding has just published a volume, "No Day of Triumph," in which he tells what he heard and saw from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi Delta. Richard Wright, in an introduction to the book, calls it "a manifesto to the Negro and a challenge to America." Wright declares that Redding's narrative "moves on a high, sensitive plane, and he depicts how one man, surrounded with falsehood and confusion, groped toward truth and dignity and understanding." The following autobiographical passage is an excerpt from the book and is reprinted by arrangement with the publishers, Harper & Bros. Mr. Redding, a graduate of Brown University, is at present head of the English Department in the State Teachers College, Elizabeth City, N. C. His book is an intensely critical study of the values in his own Negro middle-class background. In the following passage he recalls his inner turmoil and quest for integration as a young Negro intellectual.

IN MY senior year I met Lebman. For several lonely months I had been the only Negro in the college and the sense of competitive enmity, which began to develop slowly in me in my second year, was now at its height. It was more than a sense of competition. It was a perverted feeling of fighting alone against the whole white world. I raged with secret hatred and fear. I hated and feared the whites. I hated and feared and was ashamed of Negroes. (The memory of it even now is painful to me.) I shunned contacts with the general run of the latter, confining myself to the tight little college group centered around Boston. But even this group was no longer as satisfying as once it had been, and I gradually withdrew from it, though the bond of frustration was strong. But my own desperation was stronger. I wished to be alone. My room in University Hall had almost no visitors, but it was peopled by a thousand nameless fears.

Furtively trying to burn out the dark, knotted core of emotion, I wrote acidulous verse and sent bitter essays and stories to various Negro magazines. One editor wrote, "You must be crazy!" Perhaps I was. I was obsessed by nihilistic doctrine. Democracy? It was a failure. Religion? A springe to catch woodcocks. Truth? There was no objective ground of truth, nothing outside myself that made morality a principle. Destroy and destroy, and perhaps, I remember writing cynically, "from the ashes of nothingness will spring a phœnix not altogether devoid of beauty." All my thoughts and feelings were but symptomatic of a withering, grave sickness of doubt.

And then I met Lebman.

HE WAS a Jew. He had lived across the hall from me since the fall, and I had seen him once or twice in only the most casual way. Then late one night he knocked at my door. When I opened it, he was standing there pale and smiling, a lock of damp, dark hair falling across his wide, knotty forehead.

"I saw your light. Do you mind if I ask you something?" he said diffidently.

"Come in," I said automatically; but all my defenses immediately went up.

Still smiling shyly, he came into the room and stood in the center of the floor. He carried a book in his hand, his longer fingers marking the place. He was wearing pajamas and a robe. I remember I did not close the door or sit down at first, but stood awkwardly waiting, trying to exorcise my suspicion and fear. He looked around the room with quiet, friendly curiosity.

"I've been reading your stuff in the *Quarterly*," he said. "It's good."

"Thanks," I said. And I remember thinking, "Don't try to flatter me, damn you. I don't fall for that stuff." Then I tried to get ahold of myself, groping at my tangled feelings with clumsy fingers of thought in an action almost physical. "Thanks."

"I think you are after something," he said. It was a cliche, and I did not like talking about my writing. It was always like undressing before strangers. But Lebman was sincere, and now unembarrassed.

"You do?" I said, trying to say it in a tone that would end it.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Oh, it's plain in your writing. You know, I correct papers in philosophy too. Your paper on Unamuno, it was plain there. That paper was all right too."

"I wish I knew what I was after, or that I was after something," I said defensively, cynically. I closed the door. Then in the still, sharp silence that followed, I moved to the desk and turned the chair to face the other chair in the corner. Lebman sat down.

"What I came to see you about was this," he said, holding the book up. And in another moment, without really asking me anything, he had plunged into a brilliant, brooding discussion of Rudolph Fisher's *Walls of Jericho*, the book he held in his hand, and of men and books. I listened captiously at first. He did not speak in the rhapsodic way of one who merely loves books and life. He spoke as one who understands and both loves and hates. He sat in the chair in the corner, where the light from the reading lamp fell upon his pale face, his narrow, angular shoulders. Through the window at his elbow we could see the mist-shrouded lights outlining the walks of the middle campus. Lebman talked and talked. I listened.

I DO not remember all he said between that midnight and dawn, but one thing I do remember.

"I'm a Jew. I tried denying it, but it was no use. I suppose everyone at some time or other tries to deny some part or all of himself. Suicides, some crazy people go all the way. But spiritual schizophrenes aren't so lucky as suicides and the hopelessly insane. I used to think that only certain Jews suffered from this—the Jews who turn Christian and marry Christian and change their names from Lowenstein to Lowe and Goldberg to Goldsborough and still aren't happy. But they're not the only ones. Fisher makes a point of that. I thought so until I read him. You ought to read him, if you haven't."

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"I've read him," I said, trying to remember the point.

"Schizophrenia in the mind, that's the curse of God; but in the spirit, it's man's curse upon himself. It took me a long time—all through college, through three years of reading manuscripts for a publisher, through another two years of graduate school—it took me years to realize what a thing it is. I'm a thirty-six-year-old bird, and I've only just found my roost.

"That's what you want, a roost, a home. And not just a place to hang your hat, but someplace where your spirit's free, where you belong. That's what everybody wants. Not a place in space, you understand. Not a marked place, geographically bounded. Not a place at all, in fact. It's hard to tell to others," he said. "But it's a million things and people, a kind of life and thought that your spirit touches, absorbed and absorbing, understood and understanding, and feels completely free and whole and one."

That midnight conversation—though it was scarcely that—recurred to me many times in the years immediately following.

When I came up for graduation in 1928, it still had not occurred to me to think of finding work to do that would turn my education to some account. My brother had been graduated from Harvard Law, and I thought randomly of earning money to follow him there. My credits were transferred. But I earned very little and I could discover in myself no aborbing interest, no recognition of a purpose. The summer blazed along to August. Then, out of the blue, John Hope offered me a job at Morehouse College in Atlanta. I took it. I was twenty-one in October of that fall, a lonely, random-brooding youth, uncertain, purposeless, lost, and yet so tightly wound that every day I lived big-eyed as death in sharp expectancy of a mortal blow or a vitalizing fulfillment of the unnamable aching emptiness within me.

But Morehouse College and the southern environment disappointed me. The college tottered with spiritual decay. Its students were unimaginative, predatory, pretentious. Theirs was a naked, metal-hard world, stripped of all but its material values, and these glittered like artificial gems in the sun of their ambition. An unwholesome proportion of the faculty was effete, innocuous, and pretentious also, with a flabby softness of intellectual and spiritual fiber and even a lack of personal force. They clustered together like sheared sheep in a storm. They were a sort of mass-man, conscious of no spiritual status even as men, much less as a people. They were a futile, hamstrung group, who took a liberal education (they despised mechanical and technical learning) to be a process of devitalization and to be significant in extrinsics only. They awarded a lot of medallions and watch charms. Try as I might, I could feel no kinship with them. Obviously my home was not among them.

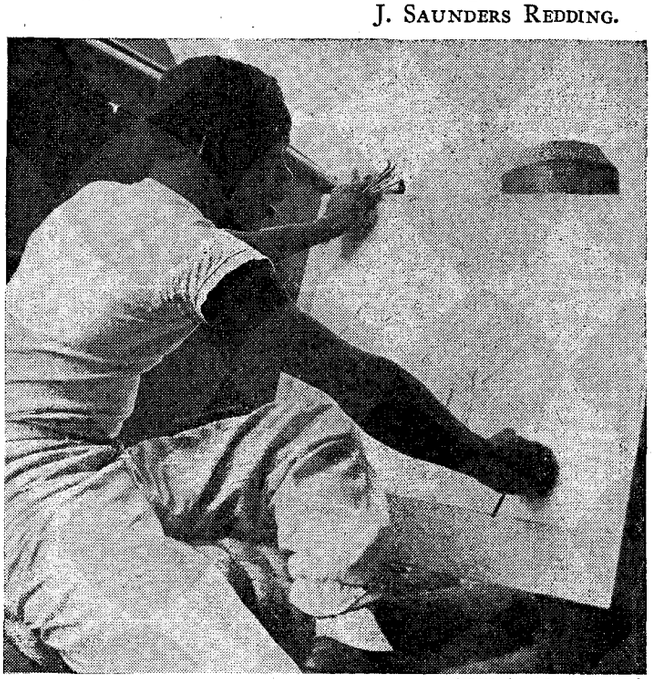
I THOUGHT often of Lebman in the pre-dawn quiet of my room, saying, "Not a place in geography, but a million things and people your spirit touches, absorbed and absorbing." I did not want sanctuary, a soft nest protected from the hard, strengthening winds that blew hot and cold through the world's teeming, turbulent valley. I wanted to face the wind. I wanted the strength to face it to come from some inexpressibly deep well of feeling of oneness with the wind, of belonging to something, some soul-force outside myself, bigger than myself, but yet a part of me. Not my family merely, or institution, or race; but a people and all their topless strivings; a nation and its million destinies. I did not think in concrete terms at first. Indeed, I had but the shadow of this thought and feeling. But slowly the shadow grew, taking form and outline, until at last I felt and knew that my estrangement from my fellows and theirs from me was but a failure to realize that we were all estranged from something fundamentally ours. We were all withdrawn from the heady, brawling, lusty stream of culture which had nourished us and which was the stream by whose turbid waters all of America fed. We were spiritually homeless, dying and alone, each on his separate hammock of memory and experience.

This was emotional awareness. Intellectual comprehension came slowly, painfully, as an abscess comes. I laid no blame beyond immediate experience. Through hurt and pride and fear, they of this class (and of what others I did not know) had deliberately cut themselves off not only from their historical past but also from their historical future. Life had become a matter of asylum in some extra time-sphere whose hard limits were the rising and the setting sun. Each day was another and a different unrelated epoch in which they had to learn again the forgetting of ancestral memory, to learn again to bar the senses from the sights and sounds and tastes of a way of life that they denied, to close the mind to the incessant close roar of a world to which they felt unrelated. This vitiated them, wilted them, dwarfed their spirits, and they slunk about their gray astringent world like ghosts from the shores of Lethe.

I tried fumblingly to tell them something of this, for my desire for spiritual wholeness was great. I yearned for some closer association with these men and women, some bond that was not knit of frustration and despair. In impersonal terms I tried to tell them something of this. They snubbed me. They looked upon me as a pariah who would destroy their societal bond, their asylum. They called me fool—and perhaps I was. Certainly I was presumptuous. Their whispers and their sterile laughter mocked me. They were at pains to ridicule me before the students. They called me radical, and it was an expletive the way they used it, said in the same way that one calls another a snake. For three years I held on, and then I was fired.

BUT my seeking grew in intensity and the need to find became an ache almost physical. For seven, eight years after that I sought with the same frantic insatiability with which one lives through a brutal, lustful dream. It was planless seeking, for I felt then that I would not know the thing I sought until I found it. It was both something within and something without myself. Within, it was like the buried memory of a name that will not come to the tongue for utterance. Without, it was the muffled roll of drums receding through a darkling wood. And so, restricted in ways I had no comprehension of, I sought, and everywhere—because I sought among the things and folk I knew—I went unfinding.

J. SAUNDERS REDDING.



Official US Navy Photograph

Negro art goes to war. A member of the US Coast Guard, Sherman Monty Whitson, does a sketch of General MacArthur.

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TRAGEDY OF NEGRO DOCTORS

Alvah Bessie tells the heartbreaking story of Negro surgeons, distinguished in their field, whom the Army won't take despite the desperate shortage of medical men.

THE United States Army is desperately in need of medical personnel. In accordance with that fact, it recently asked doctors and dentists under forty-five to enlist and accept commissions; and it indicated that those who did not enlist might expect to be drafted. The men facing the guns of the Axis need the services of trained physicians, surgeons, oral surgeons. And certainly it would be a strange soldier who would insist on having his desperate wounds treated by a man whose skin was the identical color of his own.

In New York's Harlem there are about 200 Negro physicians and surgeons. Many of them, patriotic Americans, answered the Army's call for medical personnel and filled out enlistment papers. Up to last week not a single Harlem Negro physician or dentist had been called into the Army Medical Corps unless he previously held a reserve commission; and the number of reservists who have been called is no more than six.

IN Harlem I talked to two of the most distinguished men in their field; one an oral surgeon of twenty years' standing, Dr. Arnold Donawa, who served with the International Brigade in Spain. The loyalist government thought enough of this man to entrust him with two hospitals devoted entirely to the treatment of face wounds. The other man I talked to was Dr. George D. Cannon, physician and surgeon, president of the Manhattan Central Medical Society—an organization of Negro doctors in Harlem. The stories these two men told me were extremely disheartening. Neither man was bitter. Both agreed that their people—who constitute over ten percent of our total population—ardently desire the defeat of Hitlerism. Both agreed that, despite this fact, the enthusiasm of the Negro people for the war is not at fever pitch.

"We try to forget the fact of Jim Crow," said Doctor Cannon. "We would like to forget it. But every day it stares us in the face; every day we read it in the newspapers. Jim Crow is everywhere; in the Army, the Navy, in industry, in the unions. We can't forget it."

Here are some of the facts Dr. Cannon and his colleague, the distinguished oral surgeon, Dr. Donawa, told me:

Dr. Donawa applied for a commission and was called down to talk to an officer in the Procurement and Assignment Division of the Medical Corps. There was some desultory conversation about Spain. "On the basis of your age and experience," said the officer, "I'd have to rank you as a major." The oral surgeon nodded. "Now, what's the *lowest* commission you'd accept?" the officer said. The oral surgeon said he would accept any commission the US Army offered him. "Well, to be frank with you," said the officer, "you stand a slim chance. We like to get youngsters right out of school." The officer did *not* state that (1) it is impossible to get accomplished oral surgeons "right out of school," and (2) practically no Negro doctors are graduating from school—no more than 100 a year, since the schools that accept Negroes are stringently limited. Dr. Donawa has yet to hear from the Army about the disposition of his application.

Dr. ——, who studied at Flower Hospital and long held a reserve commission in the Army, was called up with most of the men of his class. He was recommissioned, assigned to Fort ——, was told when to report, what train to take. He closed his office, arranged for the disposition of his practice —when the Army "found out" he was a Negro. (Dr. ——'s skin is very light.) He was told to wait "until he heard" from the Army. He has been waiting over a year now.

A PROMINENT Negro physician was assigned to Fort ——, where he was the only Negro officer in camp. As an officer he could not associate with enlisted men. As an officer he was supposed to live in barracks with other officers. "Naturally," it was impossible to quarter him with other (white) officers. He was given a tent to himself, with no toilet facilities; the weather was bad. He complained and was told it would all "be taken care of." A few days later he was moved into the officers' barracks—*after all the other officers had been removed!* There, from six PM to six AM he lives in splendid isolation; no recreational or social facilities exist for a single Negro officer; there is no one to talk to.

At Fort —— there is a base hospital staffed by both Negro and white doctors. On a particular day not so long ago, a line of soldiers was waiting for syphilis treatments. There were only a few Negro soldiers; there were many white soldiers.There were only a few white doctors; there were many Negro doctors in proportion to the Negro soldier patients. Rather than permit the Negro physicians to administer intramuscular treatments to the white patients, white orderlies were used to "stick" the men. The impatient white soldiers protested, saying they would rather be treated by a doctor than by an orderly. But Negro doctors are not permitted to treat whites.

Many of the Negro reserve officers have yet to be called into service in the Army; many Negro outfits are served by white doctors. The Navy still accepts *no* Negro doctors or dentists. A delegation from the War Defense Committee of the National Medical Association (Negro) waited on the surgeon general of the Army. They offered the services of their member-physicians and surgeons. The Army thanked them. They asked how many doctors might be expected to be called. They were told there was no way of knowing "until the 1943 report of the Army is in." They were told all they had to do was send for enlistment papers to the office of the surgeon general, fill them out, return them. When they are received, they are then sent to Procurement and Assignment for a statement of availability and qualifications. Then "if there is an opening or need," the doctor will be assigned. If not, his commission will be "deferred." This is, of course, a run-around.

Dr. Cannon and Dr. Donawa agree that although the Army has stated it would take Negro personnel up to ten percent of the total personnel required, it has not done so. They agree that every attempt was made actually to *discourage* the enlistment of Negro medical and dental personnel. (One man was rejected, for instance, for being four pounds overweight—even when it was acknowledged by the examining doctor that the extra four pounds were muscle tissue, not adiposity.) Both surgeons feel that the bottleneck exists chiefly in the office of the surgeon general.

THE New York County Medical Society (which accepts Negroes in membership where many county medical societies, especially in the South, will not), has passed a resolution denouncing discrimination. In a recent issue of the *Bulletin* of the Physicians Forum, whose members are also members of the New York County Society, is an editorial on "Jim Crow, 1942." It says, in part:

"What is this color bar idea? It is surely high time it was quashed. Is not the magnificent part which the Filipinos played in defense of their country sufficient evidence of what a free people will do? And does not the apathy of the subject peoples of Burma and Malaya and India point the contrast? Why is America so loath to enlist the whole-hearted services of its loyal Negro population? . . .

"Why, specifically, may well trained Negro physicians, some of them very specially qualified, care for Negro troops only?

"Why should a Negro captain have to take orders from a white lieutenant? . . ."

Here is the case, as stated to me by Dr. Cannon and Dr. Donawa, the oral surgeon. Dr. Cannon feels that one of the keys to the situation is the persisting power, in the administration, of the bloc of Southern "Democrats," who, through seniority, command posts of influence and are "the greatest Negro-baiters of them all." He may have something there. ALVAH BESSIE.

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STATEMENTS TO "NEW MASSES" FROM PROMINENT AMERICANS

WHAT THE WAR MEANS TO THE NEGRO

Earl B. Dickerson

Member of President Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practice Committee

THE staid halls of Congress echo these days with hysterical cries of a "labor shortage." There is talk of a labor draft and a "work or fight" decree. To the average black American—whether jobless in Harlem or sharecropping in Dixie—this strange cry is somewhat maddening. For idle on the sidelines—shunned and discarded—stand millions of Negroes still barred from American industry solely because of their color. Certainly talk of a labor draft seems a sham to the Negro. He doesn't have to be drafted to work. He is begging and pleading for a chance, but for the most part his demands for decent work at decent pay have gone unanswered. Through the President's Executive Order 8802 we have made some progress toward breaking down discrimination in employment. But we have a long way to go as yet before the cry about a labor shortage carries any weight with the Negro. Black America cannot recognize legitimacy in all the hue and holler as long as Negro workingmen still are not given an equal opportunity to train for skilled work and an equal opportunity to do skilled work.

All America should realize that it will take an all-American team—a unity of all colors and races—to beat the Axis.

Negro America stands for a 100 percent war effort that will achieve the immediate opening of a second front.

Paul Robeson

AMERICAN Negroes want to win this war and want to give everything they've got toward winning it—if certain white Americans will let them. The fact is that *because* the Negro people are Jim Crowed, persecuted, denied their full rights, they have an even greater stake in this war than white Americans. A greater stake not only in the sense that an Axis victory would mean a thousandfold intensification of their present submerged status, but also in the sense that a war which has as its aim the destruction of the most reactionary forces in the world, German, Japanese, and Italian fascism, with their vicious doctrine of race hatred, is creating unparalleled opportunities for the Negro people, together with the oppressed millions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, to move forward toward freedom and equality. That is why every Negro who is loyal to his own people cannot but be 100 percent loyal to America and the United Nations.

But the fact remains that discriminatory practices in industry, in political life, and in the armed forces are weakening the fight against the Axis, just as is the continuation of imperialist policy toward India, China, and Africa. To be fully loyal to America and the United Nations we must scrap these harmful relics of the past. And as I have gone about the country I have been heartened to find that not only Negroes, but increasing numbers of whites, are beginning to speak up on these questions and demanding action now. I feel that no more patriotic speech has been made in this war than Wendell Willkie's statement in Chungking that "this war must mean an end to the empire of nations over other nations" and that immediate steps must be taken to "organize to our side not simply the sympathies, but also the active, aggressive, offensive spirit of nearly three-fourths of the people of the world who live in South America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia." And for American Negroes, what helps give this war such enormous importance is that one of the biggest factors on the side of the United Nations is the one country in the world where racial discrimination has been torn up by the roots, the Soviet Union.

John H. Sengstacke

President, Robert S. Abbott Publishing Co.; General Manager, Chicago "Defender"

AT THIS time of crisis when the safety of the nation is in peril, it seems propitious that we examine the role that each section of our population must play in its preservation. The Negro people as an integral segment of our national life are intensely interested in preserving this great nation and the democratic way of life for which it stands. They are willing now as they have been in the past to sacrifice their money, the intimacy of their home life, and their blood if necessary, to preserve the concept which they have played such an important part in developing. The tradition of their adherence to this ideal is strong. As slaves they fought and gave their lives in the revolutionary war when democracy was so narrowly construed that it did not apply to these colored Americans who were fighting for a chance to see a nation born under its banner. During the Civil War they fought in the great struggle which extended the democratic concept so that the yoke of human bondage could be torn from their necks. Now during this world conflagration they stand on the side of those people who feel that this war is a revolution against those forces which persist in hampering the extension to all peoples of the world the privileges and rights which flow from the democratic ideal.

J. Finley Wilson

Grand Exalted Ruler, Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

I AM very happy to join with you in helping to obtain the Four Freedoms in this great world crisis. I believe that if we stand together we can win the Four Freedoms, not only for the Negro in New York, but for the Negro in Georgia and Alabama. It is as good a joke as Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo would want, to read the statements of Governors Talmadge of Georgia and Dixon of Alabama. Unless we are able to stop the Alabama and Georgia Hitlers over here, I am afraid we will lose the support of the dark races over there.

Ben Davis, Jr.

Communist Candidate for Congressman-at-Large, New York

AMONG the win-the-war necessities on the home front are the breaking down of age-old injustices against the Negro people and the speedy integration of Negroes into industry, into the armed forces, and into the governing councils of the nation, on the basis of full, untrammeled equality.

Both Farley's John Bennett and Hoover's Thomas Dewey are stooges of the appeasement and defeatist forces primarily responsible for the Jim Crowism and anti-Semitism that seriously endanger victory. As attorney general of New York State, Mr. Bennett has never prosecuted a single unpatriotic employer who refused to give jobs to Negroes, Jews, Catholics, foreign-born, or other loyal minorities. Mr. Dewey never prosecuted, when he was district attorney of New York County, a single discriminating employer denying equal job rights to Negro citizens.

A vote by a Negro citizen for either Bennett or Dewey is worse than wasted. It is a vote for the poll tax and Talmadgeism in the South and for Christian Frontism and racial discrimination in the North. The only way for the Negro people to register their win-the-war, anti-Jim Crow sentiment is by voting outside

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the columns of the two major parties, by electing victory candidates irrespective of their party label. It is an honor to me and to my people to be designated as a candidate on the Communist Party ticket and to have as my running mates such tried and tested fighters as Israel Amter, candidate for governor, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, for representative-at-large. A vote for our slate is a vote by the most conscientious anti-fascist citizens in New York State who see clearly that the second front now, the equality of the Negro people, and a centralized war economy are urgent for the speedy victory of our nation over the common enemy.

Ferdinand C. Smith

National Secretary, National Maritime Union (CIO)

AMERICA cannot win the war without the unity of all peoples. We do not have that unity today. Many of the dispossessed in our country are taking the position that this is not their fight. They are wrong. It is easy to understand their confusion. To the dispossessed, the disinherited—both white and Negro—a promise of freedom and security to come is like "pie in the sky." They want it now. They are cynical about the roseate future which is to be theirs after the war is won. That position is incorrect because it is a static view of events. It is true that freedom and security will not be given them after the war. Freedom was never a gift. It has to be fought for. Today, that fight is being imperiled by the delay in opening up a second front.

And it has to be fought for now. It is that very fight—now while discrimination, injustice, and poverty are still features of American society—that will force the desired change. We don't have to guess about that. It has already happened. Just the other day a new freighter was named the *Booker T. Washington.* It was sponsored by Marian Anderson. It will be commanded by a Negro, Hugh Mulzac. There is the proof that talk about the Four Freedoms *can* be translated into deeds. It is the job of the Negro to see that it is done again and again.

Hulan E. Jack

Member of New York State Assembly

THE Negroes of America, as always, are demonstrating their unswerving loyalty to defend their country against aggression. Negro boys are fighting for democracy on far-flung battlefields with valor, courage, and determination. The future of the Negro is, like all America's, dependent on total victory over the Axis hordes of destruction. America therefore girds herself to win this war decisively with the full mobilization of her manpower and resources.

The enthusiastic role of the Negro in this conflict warrants full commendation, because he has been denied an equal share in the democracy we are fighting to preserve. America must here and now renounce discrimination against the Negro in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. He must be completely integrated into every phase of the war effort on full equal basis and must enjoy the same rights as every other American citizen, which are guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. A nation that boasts of its democratic way of life and permits the barbaric lynching of Negroes must hang its head in shame. The skullduggery of the poll taxers in the South, depriving the Negroes of their franchise, is a brazen violation of the principles of democracy. If we are completely to defeat the forces of fascism and Nazism abroad, we must rid ourselves of the hypocrisy in our democracy at home. America is all out for victory on a program of unity, which can only be achieved by giving all Americans equal opportunity, regardless of race, color, or creed.

Fred R. Moore

Editor and Publisher, New York "Age"

THIS war means exactly the same to the Negro as it means to all other Americans—a fight for the preservation of the democratic ideal of life. At the same time we, as Negroes, feel that it is rank hypocrisy for our government to talk about bringing freedom to other nations and peoples while at the same time a tenth of our own people are denied fair and equitable treatment at home. Therefore, the war for us who are classed as Negroes means a double opportunity—a chance to aid in ridding the world of Hitlerism and dictator rule, and at the same time a chance to strike a blow against Jim Crowism and discrimination at home.

WHAT THE NEGRO MEANS TO THE WAR

Charles Poletti

Lieutenant Governor, New York State

NO ARGUMENT is necessary to establish that discriminatory practices against Negroes or against any group because of race, creed, or color violate the fundamental principles of American democracy. This is a matter of simple justice. Furthermore, American democracy must be assured that in this hour of crisis each of us can give to America according to his full ability.

As lieutenant governor and State War Plans coordinator, I have vigorously fought for full opportunities for Negroes in all branches of our armed forces, for the elimination of discrimination in war industries, for legislation prohibiting the debarring of Negroes from labor unions, for amendments to the Civil Rights Law, granting all persons equal rights—regardless of race, color, or religion—and for the enactment of federal legislation to put an end to the obnoxious poll tax in every state in the union. All lovers of liberty must continue to fight for this cause until discrimination in every form has been eradicated.

George F. Addes

Secretary - Treasurer, United Automobile Workers (CIO)

THE fight for world freedom and world democracy cannot be conscientiously waged or fought with our maximum strength as long as the American worker is discriminated against because of race, color, or creed. To achieve victory will require the united effort of all our people, for no group or any combination of groups or races is sufficiently strong to defeat the powers seeking to destroy us. The weapons of war forged by Negro workers are as powerful and destructive as any other, and those who seek to stir up racial prejudice and hatred among the American people are nothing but tools of the Axis powers.

We are fighting for a better world to live in and unless all peoples within our own country and throughout the world are given equal rights and equal opportunity, we will have fought in vain.

Helen Keller

IT IS almost universally declared that the global conflict is being waged to secure equal rights and opportunities for everybody in other lands. Certainly present-day events are putting the Negro question among the problems whose solution must be attempted now. There is a nemesis both of sincerity and of practical living which will not spare either the dominant or the subject race.

More and more life's wholeness is forcing us to accept the Negro with dignity as a representative of mankind or to condemn ourselves as still belonging to an inferior type of brain and heart. The humanity we say we are defending is violated when we treat him as a social outcast or show him condescension as a son of an oppressed people. The consequences of those attitudes bind us in an ever tightening chain of guilt and retributive fear.

The obstinate prejudice that perpetuates hostility between two equally God-created

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American populations is inexcusable at this crucial time. It is a ghastly *reductio ad absurdum* for America to sacrifice millions of men allegedly to defeat Nazism and brute force while in its borders discrimination and inertia are allowed to rob the colored folk of their hard-won advances toward justice and intelligent citizenship.

Liberties are easier to keep than to regain. Every right we possess lays upon us responsibility and the hardy patience of protecting it. Therefore it is incumbent upon us to help the Negroes safeguard their bulwarks against injustice, remembering from bitter experience that if those rights are cancelled, the war cannot end in a genuine victory for democracy.

A. J. Sabath

US Representative from Illinois. Chairman, House Rules Committee.

THE Declaration of Independence which is the fundamental document upon which rest American democratic institutions, states, "all men are born equal," and just powers are derived "from the consent of the governed," while the Constitution, which is the basic law of the United States, provides by the XV Amendment, Section 1, "The right of citizens of the United States *to vote shall not be denied or abridged* by the United States or any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Section 2: *"The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."*

We are in a most desperate struggle to defend American democracy and the government of the United States against the Nazi, fascist, and Nipponese autocracies which have launched a total war for the conquest of the world, and to protect it from any such future attempt, we must strive to democratize the entire world, according to the Atlantic Charter. I ask, how can we expect the people of the world to believe in our sincerity if we do not perfect our own democracy, and how can we expect the Negro people of the United States to fight enthusiastically for America *if we deny or abridge their constitutional legal right to vote* as citizens?

William Jay Schieffelin

JOE LOUIS is an example of a true American. Loyal and unselfish, he says this is God's war and he is everlastingly right. We pray that God's kingdom may come on earth. It is up to us, black and white, to bring it about. The man who asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" was a murderer. A true man realizes that he is his brother's brother. We must persuade Christian America to act on this.

Much progress is being made in industry, in the Army and Navy. For years patient people like Booker T. Washington and the editors of *Opportunity* have laid foundations for fair treatment, and militant people like DuBois and the editors of *The Crisis* have won a large measure of justice.

We must work and fight for full citizenship rights and against discrimination, not only by enactment of laws, but by winning the hearts of all Americans. Let the campaign be carried on with ever increasing vigor, but to win *we must take care that a true picture is given. No misleading statements, which omit the great advances already made, should be allowed.*

The fight is for liberty and justice for people of every race. It will be won through fidelity, integrity, self-sacrifice, and courage. Let us have steadfast faith that God is the Father of all, and let us rejoice that we now have the great opportunity to begin to create "The Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World."

Warren G. Magnuson

US Representative from Washington. Member, House Naval Affairs Committee

AFTER all, the real reason we are fighting this war is so that fundamental American rights, regardless of color or creed, shall be preserved. Any denial or discrimination practiced during the war effort make mockery of what we are trying to do.

Malcolm S. MacLean

President, Hampton Institute, Virginia. Chairman, Fair Employment Practice Committee.

EVERYONE now knows that total war demands a nation's total resources. Total war rigidly exacts the maximum output of everything used in making war. Recognizing this, America is now marshaling over 20,000,000 workers in war industries. The nation must, therefore, smash every bottleneck that throttles production, the bottleneck of discrimination included. Any waste in the productive power of 6,000,000 Negroes throws dice with defeat. This too common miscasting of trained Negro chemists into grade-school teachers, of experienced mechanics into shop helpers, and of competent draftsmen into carpenters' helpers loses the war of total production.

There is, however, another aspect of discrimination more destructive than even the waste of productive power. If total war demands the maximum output of everything used in making war, then total war also exacts this nation's total power in the battle of ideas.

In this global ideological conflict, discrimination against Negro workers, voters, and soldiers heads this nation straight toward defeat. Discrimination is, in fact, utter defeat on the ideological front, the negation of all our dearest visions of a free world. Subtle or gross, every act of discrimination thunders to the really oppressed peoples that when American leadership bestrides the world, races now exploited and degraded can expect nothing but further degradation and exploitation.

In the Singapore debacle, Anglo-Saxon power, having sown the seed of discrimination, reaped the whirlwind of despair. Though many of us—blind to our own fault—naively dispute this truth, discrimination in America falls into place in the same pattern. To East Indians and Chinese, what America professes speaks not half so eloquently as what America does against its own darker citizens.

Fortunately, in the scales of destiny, this nation does have tangible assets. Abroad, the record and promise in the Philippines, though not blameless, is an asset. At home, too, we have not wholly shut the door of opportunity to the darker brother. To the extent they have given Negroes the chance for development and integration into national life, Hampton and Tuskegee, Howard, Lincoln, and Atlanta Universities—known and respected throughout the world—are also assets. Those many nameless, God-fearing men and women who deal justly are also an asset. But America's greatest asset is probably the official, all-too-limited, yet realistic anti-discrimination policy in industry now being followed by the federal government. And the extent to which this policy finds solid realization in American industrial and political life will be the measure of victory for the United Nations.

Kenneth Leslie

Editor, the "Protestant"

THE war, especially the war in Asia, has forced the color issue into a place where it must be solved, simply as a war measure. The whites today outside of Russia have become the dark man's burden. Whites must square themselves with this fact. Jim Crow Americans may be welcome in Australia, the "white man's continent," but everywhere else in the Orient his march will be slowed down and stopped by the weight of the racial prejudice associated with his homeland. This is why appeasement of the color question, as of every other question involving human dignity and equality, plays into the hands of fascism.

Robert W. Kenny

Democratic Candidate for California Attorney General. President, National Lawyers Guild

MY CONSISTENT thesis has been that by ending discriminatory practices we will not only release necessary manpower for our war effort and a genuine spirit of harmony and unity in fighting the enemy, but, perhaps more important, we will put into immediate practice one example of the kind of democracy that I believe we are fighting for. In this way we can begin to win the war by accomplishing one of its purposes at home.

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REVIEW AND COMMENT

GET TOUGH WITH RACIAL SLANDER

L. D. Reddick, curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, probes the basis of anti-Negro mythology. Obligations of the radio, films, theater, and book world.

THOSE who are genuinely interested in activizing the Negro people in the struggle against the Axis may as well realize that only deeds can bring this about. At the beginning of the war there was practically no concern about the will-to-fight of the Negro people. If needed or desired, this support could be gained, it was assumed, by a few honeyed phrases thrown as a sop to a naive and sentimental folk. A wave of the "Stars and Stripes," an apostrophe to Lincoln, and a horror-shout, "Hitler's gonna gitcha," was the simple formula to stampede the colored Americans into an all-out effort.

But the maneuver did not proceed according to plan. Instead of shifting spontaneously into a patriotic song and dance, a rather grim Negro hesitated long enough to raise some serious questions as to *his* stake in the fight for freedom. Even now American Negroes feel as Wendell Willkie says the "ordinary people" of the countries he has visited in Asia, Africa, and Europe feel. That is, "They all doubt in varying degrees the readiness of the leading democracies of the world to stand up and be counted upon for the freedom of others after the war is over. This doubt kills their enthusiastic participation on our side."

As far as winning the unqualified support of the Negro, we can all see now that this first rather superficial, and essentially contemptuous approach was too far away from reality to have a chance for success.

AS THE serious character of the war revealed itself, this easy optimism about "Negro morale" has given way to a certain semi-frustration and helplessness about the possibilities of improving it at all. In private conversation government spokesmen and win-the-war progressives say, "How dreadful!" when confronted with the evidences of American disunity along "racial" lines. There is deep concern over the repeated reports of clashes between Negro and white soldiers, between Negro soldiers and white civilians, between white and Negro civilians. Or when a union official like Tom Ray of Local 72, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders and Helpers Union (AFL) insists, "I'm not taking them [Negro workers] in." Or when a member of the Fair Employment Practice Committee thinks it necessary to say to an Alabama audience that all the planes and tanks of the Axis are not enough to force the South to grant "social equality" to Negroes.

This "deep concern" is quite proper, for the problem is serious. However, deep concern, the wringing of hands, and the hanging of heads are not enough. Something constructive must be done.

If Negro and white soldiers on occasion fight *each other* when there is an awful enemy before us, there must be a reason. If management refuses to hire black laborers and some workers refuse to work alongside of Negroes when there is an acute manpower shortage in these lines, there must be a reason. It is not "downright cussedness," or "natural hatred," or any variety of mystery when ordinary citizens of the Southeast say that they would rather lose the war than treat fellow-Americans as equals.

The simple fact is that Americans, or anybody else for that matter, are not born with these attitudes. They get their conception of the Negro, as of everything else, from the home, the school, the newspaper, the movie, the radio, and the other agencies of communication. It is clear, then, that if these clashes and discords are to be eliminated, the anti-Negro attitudes —commonly known as prejudices—out of which these conflicts arise, must be eliminated.

Though the above is the simple ABC which any student of human nature and public opinion knows, the policy of our government and social institutions seems to run counter to these elementary principles.

The stark truth is that instead of eliminating anti-Negro propaganda from the screen, the stage, the newspaper, the novel, the textbook, and the other materials of word and symbol in our life, the government continues to allow a steady stream of such poison to be poured into the public mind. The total effect of it all is to solidify and develop the derogatory stereotypes of the Negro which have been lodged in the American mind over the years. To be sure, this whole pattern of racial stereotypes and propaganda does not exist *in vacuo*. Historically and sociologically it arose out of and still remains part and parcel of the larger pattern of segregation, discrimination, and exploitation imposed upon the Negro. Moreover, segregation and discrimination themselves allow and promote racial slander. Likewise, racial slander in turn allows and promotes these manifestations of Jim-Crow. Thus, *as long as the current conception of the Negro remains, real national unity between Negro and white is impossible.*

The kind of propaganda which is subverting the war effort may be illustrated by numerous examples:

Last year the worst novel written on Negro life was *Mr. George's Joint*. This was written by a Texan, Elizabeth Lee Wheaton. It gives a picture of a set of the most low-down Negroes in American literature. Surely a reader in going through this novel and thinking of the issues of the day would have no inclination to stand shoulder to shoulder with such undeserving human beings. Incidentally, this novel won the Thomas Jefferson Award as the best in Southern literature for 1941.

More recently has appeared *Welcum Hinges* by Bernard Robb, which is supposed to be the memoirs of an ex-slave. This libel on the true will and effort of the Negro people under slavery and in the Civil War portrays the slaves as contented, the Yankees as little more than cattle thieves, and the freed Negroes as "uppity."

A third example of this kind of stuff may be heard over the radio. There are those disgusting clowns like "Savoy" of the *Happy Jim Parsons* skits and the *Molasses and January* team. "Amos and Andy" are not as bad as they used to be. The longer radio play, *Drums Beat in Manhattan,* turned out to be little more than a compound of Voodoo supposedly imported from Haiti. Perhaps American art would not suffer too greatly if this whole variety of performance should be wiped from the air.

AS FOR the movies, the record here is disgraceful and should be quite well known. Usually, on the screen the Negro is restricted to the role of a servant—even so, a lazy, good-for-nothing servant, devoid of manhood. His exclusive role is comic relief. The Stepin Fetchits and Hattie McDaniels are the standard types (with apologies to these artists themselves). The stories are legion of serious Negro artists being turned down by Hollywood or else offered "Aunt Jemima" or "Uncle Tom" roles. *In This Our Life* was a notable exception to this rule.

The widespread condemnation of one of the scenes in *Tales of Manhattan* was not on the grounds that this was the first time Negroes had been presented on the screen as naive and superstitious. It was neither the only time nor the worst instance of such. But the shock was that a great artist like Paul Robeson (not to forget Ethel Waters and "Rochester"), who has consistently refused to sing to Jim Crow audiences and has a splendid record of insisting upon "representative" and dignified roles in all of his work, should, at this late date, appear in such obviously fantastic scenes. Robeson himself has condemned this film and de-

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cleared that if a picketline were thrown around it, he would help picket.

Even this generally negative approach is worsened in films like *Santa Fe Trail* which took the courageous abolitionist John Brown and turned him into a heartless fanatic. The Abolition movement, almost invariably, is slandered on the screen while the dream world of moonlight and magnolias of the ante-bellum South is glorified. The latest Tarzan melodrama, *Tarzan's New York Adventure,* contains an open insult to the Negro.

Since Pearl Harbor, the series of smears on Harlem has been an outstanding newspaper slander. Almost every month there is a new "crime wave" with fantastic stories, *not* about criminals and hoodlums, but about *Negro* criminals and *Negro* hoodlums. Many of these tales, carelessly reported and interpreted with sweeping generalizations, evaporate upon investigation.

It is true that petty crime and juvenile delinquency rates in Harlem are excessive. The social and economic conditions being what they are, what can we expect? But when powerful daily papers like the New York *Times,* which is sometimes referred to as the number-one American newspaper, and the *Daily News,* which has the largest circulation of any newspaper in the western world, seem to carry on campaigns to paint Harlem as a center of vice and the land of criminals, the net effect is to conjure up in the mind of the public a fear and distrust of all Negroes everywhere. No doubt, most Negroes as they move to and fro around New York City are looked upon by the average citizen, in a vague sort of way, as "muggers" or potential "muggers."

The results of this slander—pouring forth from the radio dramas, comic strips, and news stories, plus the distortions in history textbooks, novels, and short stories—are awful. It is difficult for people who unavoidably imbibe such stuff *not* to believe that Negroes generally are worthless, if not vicious. Even some Negroes believe this. Thus, you find anti-Negro Negroes and others who go around with deep-seated inferiority complexes.

On the other hand, most Negroes recognize this slander for what it is and resent it. Their reaction against this propaganda understandably increases their dislike for white people in general and calls forth a hatred of the social system responsible for it all. Thus you have the seeds of national disunity sown by the pseudo-scholars, novelists, playwrights, and journalists. In the face of all this, the government (and the rest of us, of course) cries out for national unity but actually does little to eliminate one of the basic causes of this disunity.

From the above brief analysis the task of the government should be clear. It must take a stronger stand in dealing with racial propaganda or the hopes for unity are doomed. A sound governmental policy surely should include the following principles:

1. An absolute ban should be invoked on the use of such terms as "nigger," "darky," "pickaninny," "coon," "smoke," "sambo," "soot," and the most recent "WAACoons." Similarly, there should be a ban on derogatory treatments of the Negro which emphasize excessive laziness, stupidity, cowardice, and crime (not to mention the razor-toting, watermelon eating, and crap shooting). These bans should apply to the newspaper, radio, screen, and other media of communication.

2. The present small program of diffusing the truth about the Negro and Negro life should be expanded greatly. For example, the Negro heroes in the wars of the United States should be glorified as other heroes are. Why not a movie short on the life of Crispus Attucks or the Battle of New Orleans, the storming of Fort Wagner in the Civil War, the charge at San Juan Hill in the Spanish-American War, or the exploits of Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts in the first World War? In its broader phases this positive program would include the Negro inventors, scientists, scholars, and artists. The legend of John Henry contains all the requirements of an epic of the working class. The Office of War Information is conducting a series of short broadcasts on the various members of the United Nations. These pieces are spoken by well known news commentators. Why not a similar series on the Negro and other groups within the American nation? As a counterfoil to *Gone with the Wind,* Hollywood should be urged to do *Drums of Morning,* the new Philip Van Doren Stern novel which treats the anti-slavery movement as a crusade for the freedom of man.

3. Jim Crow on the stage and screen should be abolished. Let the Negro actor play the part which corresponds to his talents.

These are a few examples, by way of illustration, which suggest the broad outline of what can and ought to be done. If national unity along "racial" lines is important, then in the same way that we have invoked dimout and blackout regulations, rationed sugar, gasoline, and rubber, stabilized rents, prices, and wages, quadrupled taxes, and altogether given up certain luxuries, we should "get tough" about racial slander. Let us wipe out this vicious propaganda and give the whole people a chance to unite on the basis of true democracy and the equality of man.

L. D. REDDICK.

Mr. Reddick is curator of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature of the New York Public Library. His article is a section from a forthcoming book, "The Color Question and the War."

From Five Continents

IF YOU want to see the typescript of President Roosevelt's historic "Atlantic Charter" radio address, with the President's own editing in longhand—take a trip to Harlem, to the public library at 105 West 136th Street. You will find it there, where it belongs, with the speeches and writings of men and women from five continents on "The War and the

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Whole People." You will find it, also where it belongs, in a special exhibit case with the statements of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Joseph Stalin, and Haile Selassie. For "The War and the Whole People" is the title of a display assembled by the library's Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, for a purpose best described by the catalog of the exhibit:

"The abuse of the expression 'The People's War' does not obscure the deep and universal yearning for a better world. Those who are called upon to sacrifice life and treasure could not do so willingly without the faith that out of it all will come security and happiness. The will-to-fight of the earth's multitudes—on the Yangtse, the Don, the Ganges, the Congo, the Amazon, the Danube, the Thames, and the Mississippi—is based upon a vision. This vision of freedom *from* want and fear, freedom *for* the dignity of man and the unfolding of the human spirit is a dream that must come true."

Some of the people represented in the exhibit have said it more eloquently, some less. But they have said it, and you should read their words. They make an impressive total, impressive less for quantity, however, than for the variety of individuals who have spoken and the range of their statements. One turns from a typescript of a Wendell Willkie speech urging "equality of opportunity for every race and nation" to a typescript of an article by Eleanor Roosevelt with the same theme. Or from Sumner Welles' Decoration Day address ("The age of imperialism is ended.") to a pamphlet of excerpts from the speeches of Earl Browder and James W. Ford on the Negro and the War. Other notable Americans whose utterances have found a place in the display include Pearl Buck, Archibald MacLeish, Paul V. McNutt, Walter White, Frederick Schuman, Tallulah Bankhead, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Countee Cullen (represented by his poem on the second front, published in NEW MASSES). Out of the past, Frederick Douglass speaks to us on the Negroes of America, their part in preserving and building America.

But it is by no means an all-American display. We are shown publications from the Belgian Information Center and from the Fighting French dealing with the Belgian Congo and French Africa. India has a significant place—not only are we reminded of Nehru's demand for "full and equal freedom for all countries of Asia," and Krishnalal Shridharani's book *My India, My America.* There are also writings by people outside India, like Kate Mitchell, who recognize and understand the Indian people's desire for freedom and the pertinence of that desire to the United Nations' struggle against the slave-traders of Berlin. Latin America is represented by Haiti's president, Elie Lescot, whose inaugural speech, as translated and published in the *Negro Quarterly*, is prominently displayed. The Jewish people of the world, their long struggle against discrimination, their stake in this war, are the subject of several articles and pamphlets. B. G.

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TWO FILMS, ONE REVUE

The Scottish do better than the English in "Inside Britain." Joy Davidman doesn't like "Panama Hattie." . . . Alvah Bessie on "Let Freedom Sing," the Youth Theater revue.

ASSEMBLING short subjects into a harmonious whole is an art in itself, and one which the producers of *Inside Britain* have neglected to master. The film consists of British Ministry of Information shorts—good, passable, and what can only be called, in all charity, well-meaning. There are too many of them, and in addition to certain grave internal faults they are badly assorted, ranging from a magnificent serious survey of Scotland's part in the war to an anomalous delirium of color called a musical poster. If the British morale can stand that, it can stand anything.

The cumulative effect, unfortunately, is dull. There are admirable high spots, however, especially the Scotland film, which is so far superior in technique and general common sense to the others that it is worth considering separately. Surveying Scotland's contribution to the war effort, this short emphasizes action all the way through—the vast production of the Clydeside steel mills, the heroic work of the Ayrshire and Dumbarton coal miners, the fields of bracken that are now yielding potatoes, the former pasture land that is now growing wheat. The Highlands and the Lowlands are mustering; up in the mountains trees are being felled and the agile, long-fleeced, black-faced sheep are being sheared in millions. Down in the valley women are running great new farms, learning to manage the gigantic Clydesdale horses, milking the splendid Ayrshire cows. Everything goes at a pace of swift efficiency, everything is done on a gigantic scale. There is time nonetheless to introduce you to the Scottish workers and let them tell you of their share in the war, state their demand for action—"I'm digging the coal, the boys in the armed forces'll turn on the heat!"

In this picture of a people at war, there is much which suggests Soviet war films—the coordinated mass effort, the emphasis on actual achievement, the vigorous realism with which war problems are approached.

All the more, in contrast, do the English episodes suffer from pathetic unreality. A lamentable opening section is devoted to assuring us that you could have knocked England over with a feather when Hitler marched into Poland, and that feathers have been knocking her over ever since. There is much worry about a vaguely threatened invasion of England, but only the feeblest suggestion of invading the Continent. Succeeding shorts seem dedicated to the proposition that you can hardly tell war from a cricket match. Softball games, comic songs, mock ferocity in the peaceful countryside abound. All this would be admirable as a background to fighting scenes, but of real fighting there is only the already familiar Commando raid on a Norwegian island. Passive endurance is stressed as the chief virtue, perpetuating the illusion that people are being heroic when they are only being philosophical. Repeatedly the English audience is told what a good time everybody is having, is adjured not to worry about anything. It is hard not to wonder if this soothing sirup is not a deliberate obscuring of the issue—an evasion of the people's demand for a second front.

Yet much of this limpness may be due to inept film-making, rather than to conscious evasion of the real war. A short film subject must be constructed rather like a short story, with the same economy in the buildup, the same swift climb to a peak of excitement. Sheer ignorance of proper construction has ruined much of the good material in *Inside Britain*. A study of the air-ferry pilots, which should have been a dramatic study of the clash between an unsuspecting pilot and a sudden flight of Messerschmitts, goes soggy and dull because of ten minutes of quite aimless flying back and forth in the beginning and a complete throwaway of the vital moment in ten casual seconds. Perhaps the most stirring episode, the prevention of an ammunition explosion in a railway yard fire, is allowed to dwindle away slowly in a bumbling commentary. Other sections, such as the otherwise heartwarming one in which a white-collar worker is metamorphosed into an engineer, suffer from an excess of lumbering playfulness.

And every episode (except, needless to say, the Scotch one) is weighted down by talk. Some are all talk; workers and soldiers stand quietly and have little question-and-answer games with each other. Even the final section in which Leslie Howard, quoting Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, speaks for the rights of man, is presented as if Mr. Howard were a kindly schoolteacher giving a history lesson. The great trouble with the film, it will be seen, is that people come . . . people go . . . nothing ever happens. The word for *Inside Britain* is inefficient.

I USED to like the movies. I still do, theoretically, and when a really good film comes along I am the first to faint with emotion—and shock. But when you have to see several films a week—whatever films come up—you get so you know the three standard Hollywood screenplays pretty well by heart. Many's the time I have been shushed in our best theaters for automatically giving Clark Gable his answer before Lana Turner could get around to it. And many's the time I've been shushed for saying what I think of Hollywood musicals with more emphasis than discretion.

So a long summer vacation, at a safe distance from the Rivoli and the Rialto and the Bijou and the Gem, was a wonderful thing for me. After a few weeks of swimming around in the lake with the fish and then eating the fish (goodbye, little playmates!) I could even contemplate the possibility of taking in a movie, some evening, *for fun*. When I got over to the neighborhood playhouse, an unremodeled barn, I always discovered, however, that they were playing either *Jive It, Jeep* or *It's Sarong Way to Tipperary*. So I didn't go. So I came back to the city a fine upstanding figger of a woman, full of innocent healthy sunburn and the joy of life. And then I stumbled upon *Panama Hattie*.

This is the musical about the showgirl-who-loves-the-gentleman, who is warned she'll ruin his career, so she decides to give him up, but he yanks her off the boat at the last minute, etc. It has three unfunny sailors, and it continues the Hollywood Bad Neighbor policy by yet another presentation of all the territory south of the Rio Grande as a vast expanse of floor show. It has a brilliant Negro singer named Lena Horne, but nowhere near enough of her, and it has much more than enough of Ann Sothern and other impedimenta. So my sunburn has all faded to a sickly yellow, those bags are back in place under my eyes, and my husband says I am no longer the woman he married.

JOY DAVIDMAN.

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time. High tribute is paid the United Nations, the Soviet guerrilla fighters, the blessings of democracy, the advantages of progress as against "sitting on your status-quo"; and isolationist senators, labor-baiters, and native fascisti are vigorously attacked.

But it is a pity that with all their energy and determination, the Youth Theater has not been able to give us a better revue than *Let Freedom Sing.* For there is music by Harold Rome, Marc Blitzstein, and Earl Robinson, and there are a number of very talented young people performing, notably Betty Garrett, Phil Leeds, Mordecai Bauman, Mitzi Green, and Berni Gould.

Yet the quality of the material never comes up to scratch; the sputtering fuse of the humor never reaches a real detonation; the dancing is second-rate and the tunes are scarcely memorable, with one notable exception. A musical revue is no cinch to pull off, and I am not evaluating *Let Freedom Sing* by what are commonly called Broadway standards. For "Broadway" is slick and glittering and superficial, and the Youth Theater people are quite sound in their determination to be something more than that—namely, pointed, topical, biting, and full of the joy of life.

Few of the sketches—about overcrowding in Washington, about the WAACS (in extremely bad taste), the blackout, military strategy—are sufficiently pointed to hit you where you should be hit. Earl Robinson's song, "The House I Live In," carries the deepest feeling of the evening. Mordecai Bauman sings it with utter simplicity and sincerity of emotion, and a host of young people dance gallantly, but not too well. Marc Blitzstein's "Fraught" is muffed by the nominal star of the evening, Mitzi Green, through overstatement.

There are two young people in this show, however, who are real professionals by any standards: Betty Garrett and Phil Leeds. Miss Garrett has everything it takes—youth, beauty, wit, and personality. Phil Leeds has the clown's plastic face and fine sense of timing. And both actors only require some material on which to get to work. As it is, they work hard with what they have and make more than a poor best of it.

H. T. Tsiang is an astonishing young Chinese writer who has been eking out a perilous existence in New York for some time by writing books, publishing them himself, and selling them on the streets. You may have seen him peddling his novel *The Hanging on Union Square,* his play, *China Marches On.*

Right now Mr. Tsiang is operating a theater in a New York loft building at 430 Sixth Avenue, where every Saturday and Sunday night he puts on a dramatization of *The Hanging,* and scenes from *China Marches On.* It is an amazing performance and is recommended as a curiosity in our theater, for neither *The Hanging* nor *China* can strictly be called a play, nor, with all deference to Mr. Tsiang and his American girl colleague,

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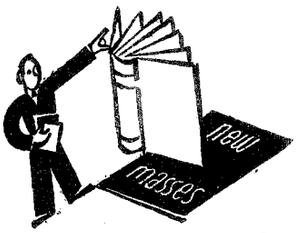

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can the performers really be called actors.

On a bare floor, assisted by a few props, Mr. Tsiang and Miss Ruth Young perform. Mr. Tsiang plays a number of characters—an unemployed American, a Chinese Army captain, a Japanese spy, Life and Death, an old Chinese mother—all with the assistance of an ancient overcoat, a makeup pencil, a bundle of rags (to represent a baby), a couple of masks, and determination. His material consists of a strangely evocative sort of poetry and straight recitation with dramatic gestures. He has attempted a fusion of the ancient stylized pattern of the Chinese drama and realistic American technique. Amazing things happen, some of them successful, others not.

China Marches On is the less effective of the two "playlets." *The Hanging* is funny, bitter, touching. ALVAH BESSIE.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

WE HAVE to confess an embarrassment of riches: some of the excellent pieces we had planned for just couldn't be fitted in. For example, editor Joseph North, who has been touring the Deep South for the last two weeks, has written a series of several articles, the kind of reportage for which he is famous. The first will lead off the next issue. Richard O. Boyer's article on Councilman A. Clayton Powell, Jr.—the dynamic leader of Harlem's millions in the New York municipal government—has likewise been held over for the week. Some of our usual features, such as make NM the magazine that thousands follow from week to week for developments on the war, were forced to give way: Bruce Minton, our Washington correspondent, Claude Cockburn, our London reporter, and our military commentator, Colonel T. Next week's issue therefore provides a follow-up for this one. We aren't—as the back cover shows—just treating with the problem of the American Negro for one week and forgetting about it the next.

Which brings up a word or two about NM itself, for those who may be seeing the magazine for the first time. What we stand for speaks for itself between these two covers. We believe in hitting hard, fighting hard, and we have been doing that for well nigh thirty-two years: fighting for the things that will make a better nation, a better life. And at the moment that faces us now we are fighting—almost alone among the weekly magazines—for the opening of a second front in Europe. That could mark not only the turning point in the war, but the difference between victory over the hated enemy, or slavery under his heel.

Special mention goes to one of our editors, A. B. Magil, who is chiefly responsible for the conception, and all the hard work that went with it, of this week's NM.

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